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The Way Made Plain

by

James H. Brookes, D.D.

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The Way Made Plain

By the
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PREFACE

THOSE who carefully read the first thirteen verses of the tenth chapter of Romans cannot fail to perceive the logical order and marvellous clearness with which the Holy Ghost there sets forth the Way of Life. It is the aim of this little book to follow that order, and in some feeble measure to reflect that clearness. Hence the Scriptures are closely followed at every step of the argument, because they alone can guide our feet in the paths of peace.

Frequently has the author, when dealing with inquiring souls, undertaken a simple exposition of this instructive and interesting passage, and often has the Lord been pleased to own it in imparting light to the darkened understanding and comfort to the troubled heart of the anxious sinner. To his blessing and favor it is now commended with the earnest prayer that, as sent forth by the American Sunday-school Union, it may be more greatly owned in His service, to the glory of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost forever.

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The Way Made Plain

CHAPTER I

MAN'S NEED OF SALVATION

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."—*Romans* x. 1.

IN the great work of delivering lost men from the ruin in which they are involved, the Holy Ghost produces the conviction that they need to be saved. Without this conviction "they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely."[1] However alarming their state as "strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world,"[2] and however appalling their peril as exposed to the righteous infliction of "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil,"[3] they neither understand their condition nor perceive their danger until made to feel that they are sinners.

There are multitudes of our race of whom it can be truthfully said that "they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who

[1] Ps. lviii. 4, 5. [2] Eph. ii. 12. [3] Rom. ii. 8, 9.

mind earthly things;" [1] and yet they go their downward way profoundly indifferent to their guilt and their doom. They eat and drink, they awake and sleep, they give their thoughts and time entirely to the pursuits of the world, and run their round of business or of pleasure, without one correct conception of the Being who made them, and without one spark of spiritual life.

Their ignorance of their real character and their insensibility to their eternal interests furnish conclusive evidence both of their sinfulness and of their deplorable unconsciousness of sin. Hence the first practical step towards their recovery is taken when the Divine Spirit, whose office it is to "reprove [or rather, to convince] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," [2] leads them to see that they are undone, and need an almighty Arm to rescue them from impending destruction.

The agency He employs in teaching them this essential and fundamental truth is the revealed word of God, or the Sacred Scriptures, whether communicated in the pulpit or through the press; whether made known in public instruction or in private study; whether carried to the heart by a popular address or by a personal appeal. "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made," [3] and in the new creation "the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents

[1] Phil. iii. 18, 19. [2] John xvi. 8. [3] Ps. xxxiii. 6.

of the heart." [1] "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." [2]

If, therefore, we would inquire whether man, as such, and as born into the world, is in urgent need of salvation, we must surely consult the testimony of the "word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." [3] Remember, it is the word of *God*, and He is too wise to err, too holy to tell a lie, too just to bring false accusations against His creatures, and too kind to heap upon them undeserved reproaches. Let those who claim that they are entitled to His favor on the ground of their own merits make good their claim, and most gladly will He recognize it and bestow upon them the full reward of their virtue. He is not an unfeeling tyrant rejoicing in the exercise of an unrestrained power to crush and kill; nor is He an unmerciful Judge, eagerly inclining to inflict upon the terrified delinquent the extremest rigors of the law without regard to the palliating circumstances under which the offence was committed. Not only His name, but His very nature, is "Love;" [4] and it is certain that His testimony concerning man, and His sentence in view of that testimony, are in perfect harmony with His boundless benevolence and His inexhaustible patience.

But every one must at once see the utter absurdity of accepting as true the revelation which He has made of His attributes in the Bible, and of rejecting as false the revelation which He has made in the same Bible

[1] Heb. iv. 12.
[2] Rom. x. 17.
[3] 1 Peter i. 23.
[4] 1 John iv. 8.

of ourselves. Either all is true or all is false, or, at best, there is no criterion to distinguish the true from the false, except the odd fancies and foolish whims of the reader. If one is at liberty to set aside as incredible what the Scriptures affirm of man's characteristics, another is at equal liberty to treat with contempt what they declare of God's perfections; and thus are we hurled back into the darkness of nature, or left to grope our way to the unknown future by the feeble glimmerings of reason.

It must be obvious, after a moment's reflection, that consistency, logic, and sound sense require us to place the teachings of the Bible on a common footing with respect to their authority, authenticity, and genuineness. Especially is our faith demanded in a doctrine which pervades the whole book from first to last, and which is interwoven in all the narratives, in all the Psalms, in all the prophecies, in all the parables, in all the sermons, and in all the epistles, that are contained in the inspired records. If, then, it can be shown that a uniform testimony is borne from Genesis to Revelation touching man's pressing need of salvation, we are compelled to conclude that by nature we are fallen, lost, and ruined; or, as the only alternative, we are forced to deny that God has spoken the truth in His blessed Word.

My argument here is not designed for the sceptic who can never be convinced of his fatal error by human wisdom, but for the reader whose ear has been opened to hear the "still small voice"[1] breathing

[1] 1 Kings xix. 12.

through the Book of books, and whose head is reverently bowed in the presence of its recognized divinity. Taking it for granted that those for whom these pages are intended are, through infinite grace, past the dreary region of infidelity, and that they are now turning to the "living oracles"[1] with the docility of the child Samuel, who said, "Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth,"[2] I desire to sum up briefly the solemn testimony which God gives of man's condition apart from redeeming love, and, therefore, of man's unspeakable need of salvation.

I. We assuredly learn from the language which I have placed at the beginning of this chapter that the Jews as a people, although they were highly favored above all the nations of the earth, were not delivered from the curse and dominion of sin; for the apostle writes, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." This earnest expression of concern for his countrymen would of course be meaningless or self-contradictory if they were not under the condemnation of God's broken law; and hence the inspired writer, "moved by the Holy Ghost,"[3] asserts that they were still unsaved. The unavoidable inference which we thus gather from his words will be confirmed, and the argument to prove man's need of salvation will be strengthened, if we glance at other statements relative to the condition of the Jewish nation. In the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, for example, the same inspired writer exclaims with the great-

[1] Acts vii. 38. [2] 1 Sam. iii. 9. [3] 2 Peter i. 21.

est emotion, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."[1]

The great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart expressed in this touching assurance, and the astounding declaration that he could wish that himself were accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh, are wholly unaccountable on the supposition that they were already saved. No, they were lost! and the apostle, taught by the Spirit, knew they were lost, in the very face of their exalted privileges and their high religious character in the estimation of men. To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, and the fathers, and national connection with the Messiah; but still they needed to be saved. Many of them could say, as did Paul describing his own state previous to his new birth by faith in Jesus, "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the

[1] Rom. ix. 1–5.

church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless;"[1] but still they needed to be saved. Many of them, like the Pharisee of whom our Saviour speaks, could stand in the temple and pray by themselves, and say, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess;"[2] but still they needed to be saved. Many of them made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the borders of their garments, and offered long prayers, and scrupulously observed the Sabbath, and compassed sea and land to gain one proselyte, and added to the burdensome requirements of the ceremonial law by self-imposed regulations, and in the ardor of their devotion outstripped the demands of divine ordinances by keeping pace with the numerous traditions of the elders; but still they needed to be saved.

Read the pathetic lamentation of our Lord when He beheld the city of David and wept over it: not the tears of silent sympathy, as at the grave of Lazarus, but with all the tokens of consummate and convulsive grief, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."[3] Read the last message which He delivered in the presence of the people when He cried, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as

[1] Phil. iii. 5, 6. [2] Luke xviii. 11, 12. [3] Luke xix. 42.

a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."[1] Surely it requires no other evidence to prove that the Israelites as a body were unsaved at the time the apostle wrote; but if *they* needed to be saved, what must be said of the rest of mankind? If they were lost, notwithstanding their favorable circumstances, their peculiar advantages, their distinguishing mercies, their strict morality, their religious fervor, their illustrious ancestry, and their wonderful history,—radiant with the glory of Jehovah's presence,—how is it possible that "sinners of the Gentiles"[2] have no need of a gracious and mighty hand to pluck them as brands from the burning? Should any one reply to all this that the Jews were condemned for their rejection of Christ, I admit the justice of the answer, but immediately turn and bring the charge of the same stupendous sin against every unbeliever who may read this book.

II. Yes, my friend, you are involved in the same condemnation, as I shall now proceed to show, and thus bring forward my second argument to convince you of your need of salvation. All who profess to accept any portion of the Scriptures as inspired agree that the words of Jesus must be regarded as authoritative and final upon every doctrine which He teaches. Let us see, then, what He repeatedly affirms touching the necessity of faith and the soul-destroying crime of

[1] Matt. xxiii. 37-39. [2] Gal. ii.15.

unbelief. In His memorable interview with Nicodemus, after setting forth the amazing love of God in the gift of this dear Son, He adds, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."[1]

Again we hear His solemn testimony, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [or judgment]; but is passed from death unto life."[2] "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."[3] "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."[4] "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."[5] "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. . . . But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you."[6] "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."[7] When the Spirit is come He will convince the world "of sin, because they believe not on me."[8]

These passages are taken almost at random from a

[1] John iii. 18.
[2] John v. 24.
[3] John vi. 28, 29.
[4] John vi. 47.
[5] John viii. 24.
[6] John x. 7, 26.
[7] John xii. 39, 40.
[8] John xvi. 9.

single Gospel, and it is unnecessary to say that there is nothing in all the word of God to contradict them. Elsewhere it is written that the Saviour, whose infinite love for the sinner led Him to the cross, declared among the last words He uttered on earth, "He that believeth not shall be damned;"[1] and the Holy Spirit says, by the apostle John, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."[2] Such, then, is the vital importance of belief in Christ, that salvation in all its unutterable meaning, in all its boundless extent, in all its everlasting joys, depends upon its exercise; and such is the horrible sin of unbelief that if persisted in to the close of life, it will certainly drown the soul in perdition.

How imperative, then, is the duty of the unbeliever to flee for refuge to the cross of Christ! That such a refuge should have been provided in the immeasurable grace and unsearchable wisdom of God affords overwhelming demonstration of the fact that the entire human race was in extremest need: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."[3] The preciousness of the gift proves the vastness of the want it was designed to meet, and the costliness of the sacrifice reveals the depth of the woe it was intended to reach. Oh, if man did not need salvation, Jesus had not died; for it is inconceivable that the Father could have sent Him forth from His bosom, and emptied Him of His

[1] Mark xvi. 16. [2] 1 John v. 10. [3] John iii. 16.

divine and eternal glory, and humbled Him to be made of a woman, made under the law, and laid upon Him the crushing burden of our iniquities, and looked upon His prostrate form in Gethsemane, and witnessed the blows that bruised His face, and heard His disconsolate cry on Calvary, unless a stern necessity had demanded this profound condescension and mysterious suffering.

The Russian mother, who threw one and another, and then another, of her children to the howling wolves pursuing her sleigh, showed the desperate straits to which she was driven to save her life; and the Russian serf, who stayed the hungry pack with his own body that his master might escape their devouring jaws, proved how fearful was the emergency that required such an act of dauntless courage and moral heroism. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;"[1] and when Christ laid down His life, not for His friends, but for His enemies, He gave the most convincing proof of which the human mind can conceive both of the greatness of His love and the greatness of their need.

Unbelief, therefore, is a rejection of love in its highest possible manifestation, and hence it is represented as the root of all other sin and the crowning iniquity. It not only sets at defiance the insulted justice of God, but, far more, it treats with disdain or receives with unmoved indifference His overtures of mercy. It derides His authority, it despises His law,

[1] John xv. 13.

it ridicules His warnings, it rejects His invitations, it slights His compassion, it calls Him a liar when He says, "He that believeth not shall be damned," and it joins the ribald crowd in reviling His dying Son, or at least it turns with heartless unconcern from that wail of forsaken woe that shook the mighty pillars of the globe.

"I asked the heavens, What foe to God hath done
This unexampled deed? The heavens exclaim:
'*Twas man!* and we, in horror, snatched the sun
From such a spectacle of guilt and shame!'

"I asked the Sea: the Sea in fury boiled,
And answered with his voice of storms, '*Twas man!*
My waves in panic at his crime recoiled,
Disclosed the abyss, and from the centre ran!'

"I asked the Earth: the Earth replied aghast,
'*Twas man!* and such strange pangs my bosom rent,
That still I groan and shudder at the past!'
To man, gay, smiling, thoughtless *man*, I went,
And asked him next: *he* turned a scornful eye,
Shook his proud head, and deigned me no reply."

Think you that a sin like this, which remains unsubdued and unaffected even at the cross, can be a slight offence, or that man does not need salvation while it holds dominion over him? If every other sin were forgiven, or if no other sin had been committed, this alone would drive the unbeliever away forever from the presence of God, and rear an insurmountable barrier between his soul and true happiness.

CHAPTER II

MAN'S NEED OF SALVATION

III

UNBELIEF and all other iniquities spring from a nature essentially corrupt, according to the abundant testimony of God, and consequently the force of the argument to establish man's need of salvation becomes irresistible if this can be shown. Let us look, then, at some of the testimony as it lies scattered throughout the Bible. In the beginning of the inspired word, and at a period in the history of our race which poets delight to celebrate as marked by winning simplicity and crowned with childlike innocence, we are told, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."[1] The words *every* and *only* and *evil* and *continually* are exceedingly significant in this connection, for they show that the whole fabrication or formation which distinguished him from the brute creation, including all the imaginations, desires, and purposes of the soul, were sinful, and sinful unceasingly.

Again, we read: "God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth."[2] Again, hundreds of years

[1] Gen. vi. 5.

[2] Gen. vi. 12.

later, it is said: "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."[1] Again, Jehovah says, by the prophet Isaiah: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."[2] Again, He declares, by the prophet Jeremiah, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"[3]

Passing by other testimony in the old covenant Scriptures which could be gathered from every book, and in some form from nearly every chapter, we hear our Lord saying, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh,"[4] and, "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man."[5]

Glancing forward a little farther, we find the inspired apostle writing, "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that

[1] Ps. xiv. 2, 3. [2] Isa. i. 5, 6. [3] Jer. xvii. 9.
[4] John iii. 6. [5] Mark vii. 21-23.

seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes."[1]

The same apostle also says, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing;"[2] "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;"[3] and, "You hath he quickened, who were dead [not sick nor dying, but dead] in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."[4]

Without quoting other declarations of the same import, enough has been said to show that, according to the infallible testimony of God, man is utterly ruined. Whenever, wherever, and however tried, he has proved a miserable failure. He was tried in Eden, and failed; for having believed the devil's lie,

[1] Rom. iii. 9–18.
[2] Rom. vii. 18.
[3] Rom. viii. 7.
[4] Eph. ii. 1–3.

and plucked the forbidden fruit, conscious guilt took the place of original innocence, "and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden."[1] He was tried before the giving of the law, and failed, for "until the law sin was in the world;"[2] and the Holy Ghost deduces from the universal prevalence of death the universal supremacy of sin; leading us to hear in every dying groan the thrilling announcement and to see in every new-made grave the visible demonstration of Jehovah's righteous abhorrence of iniquity. He was tried under the law, and failed; for it is written, "We know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."[3] He was tried under grace, and failed; for "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."[4]

We cannot be surprised at this repeated failure under the most favorable circumstances, when we learn that after Adam fell from the high estate in which he was created, in the image and likeness of God, he "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image."[5] "In Adam all die."[6] "Through the offence of one many be dead."[7] "By one man's dis-

[1] Gen. iii. 8.
[2] Rom. v. 13.
[3] Rom. iii. 19, 20.
[4] John iii. 19.
[5] Gen. v. 3.
[6] 1 Cor. xv. 22.
[7] Rom. v. 15.

obedience many were made [or constituted] sinners."[1] "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one."[2] "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."[3] We discover, therefore, that there is an evil lying back of mere outward transgressions; for God, who knows all about us, declares that we are *by nature* children of wrath, or exposed to punishment, and hence by nature we are corrupt. We have no difficulty in understanding what is meant when it is said that a tiger is by nature bloodthirsty; and he who is willing to accept God's testimony, although it profoundly abases self, can have no difficulty in understanding what the Bible means when it says that by nature we are sinful.

IV. Out of this corrupt nature necessarily spring those evil deeds which are plainly contrary to the law of God, and therefore promptly recognized by an enlightened conscience as sinful. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."[4] Do what you will with a tree in cultivating, pruning, or transplanting it, you can never so change its nature that thorns will bring forth grapes and thistles will produce figs. So, do what you will with man by all the appliances of the highest culture and the most refined civilization, you cannot so change his nature that it will become holy. God can

[1] Rom. v. 19.
[2] Job xiv. 4.
[3] Ps. li. 5.
[4] Matt. vii. 16–18.

—and, blessed be His name! He does—impart a new nature by the power of the Holy Ghost, through faith in Jesus Christ, as revealed in His word; but the nature which we derive by birth from our parents is evil, and only evil, continually.

That the outward manifestations of such a nature should be in open conflict with the law of God is just what might be expected. "Sin," we are told, "is the transgression of the law"; [1] or, to render strictly, "sin is lawlessness": it is that spirit of insubordination, that inward resistance to Divine authority, which distinguishes the soul, and which finds expression in unceasing and flagrant disobedience. The law says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." [2] Our theological writers are much in the habit of speaking of the law as the transcript or reflection of the Divine nature; but surely the Divine nature is more than law, "for God is love"; [3] and hence it would be better to say that the law is the transcript or reflection of the Divine will concerning the duty of man to his Creator and his fellow creatures.

Of this law it may be affirmed, first, that it "is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good"; [4] second, that it is immutable, for it "cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no

[1] 1 John iii. 4.
[2] Mark xii. 30, 31.
[3] 1 John iv. 8.
[4] Rom. vii. 12.

variableness, neither shadow of turning,"[1] and "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled";[2] and third, that it has a penalty, for "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them";[3] "the wages of sin is death";[4] and "the soul that sinneth, it shall die."[5] Now, when you add to this the solemn and distinct testimony of the Bible, over and over again repeated that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,"[6] it is impossible to resist the conclusion that every man by nature is in immediate and inexpressible need of salvation.

V. After what has been said it is hardly necessary to dwell upon the words of our Lord when He exclaimed, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."[7] When He made this statement He was speaking with Nicodemus, who was a master of Israel, a ruler of the Jews, and blameless, as we would say, in all his character and conduct. Even he was informed that, Except a man (or, as it is in the original, Except any one, Except every one) be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. The best, therefore, can do with nothing less than this, whatever may be their standing in their own estimation or in the estimation of others. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."[8] I do not deny for a

[1] James i. 17.
[2] Matt. v. 18.
[3] Gal. iii. 10.
[4] Rom. vi. 23.
[5] Ezek. xviii. 4.
[6] Rom. iii. 23.
[7] John iii. 3.
[8] John iii. 7.

moment the possession of amiable traits of character and virtuous principles of conduct by thousands who know nothing of Christ as their Saviour; but still I dare not go back of His own explicit declaration, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."[1]

All the attractiveness of the most lovely disposition, and all the firmness of the most incorruptible integrity, may exist without the slightest reference to the will and glory of God, and therefore they may exist without the least spiritual life. We often witness in the brute creation touching exhibitions of devoted affection, of unswerving fidelity, of unflinching courage, and of what would be termed in man the loftiest nobility of action; but among the inferior animals there is a total want of spiritual life, because there is a total want of capacity to know God and to perform these heroic deeds from the high and commanding motive of regard to the pleasure of God. Now, of human beings it may truthfully be affirmed, no less than of the lower orders of beings, that by nature they are incapable of knowing and loving the true God and that they are utterly devoid of spiritual life until born again and made a new creation in Christ Jesus. Out of scores of texts that could be easily quoted to sustain this important proposition, two or three must answer for the present: "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."[2] "Whatsoever is not of faith is

[1] John iii. 5. [2] 1 John v. 12.

sin."[1] "Without faith it is impossible to please him."[2] Whatever else a man has, whatever excellences that excite our admiration and win our regard, he has not life until he has the Son by faith in His name; and hence we again see man's deep need of salvation.

VI. The last argument I advance to prove this fact, which it is absolutely essential that my readers should receive with an intelligent and fixed conviction of its truth, is derived from the oft-repeated declarations of God threatening the most terrible punishment against those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ in His Divine person and atoning work. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."[3] "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."[4] "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."[5] "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."[6]

Every careful reader of the Holy Scriptures knows that such passages are constantly found in the sacred pages; and if any are disposed to call them in question, they should remember that their controversy is not with the author of this book, but with the Author of

[1] Rom. xiv. 23. [2] Heb. xi. 6. [3] John iii. 36.
[4] Mark xvi. 15, 16. [5] Matt. xxv. 46. [6] Rev. xxi. 8.

the Bible, God Himself, "the Father of mercies,"[1] who "doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men,"[2] has distinctly warned us that if we die in unbelief eternal and intolerable sufferings await us in the future world. Dear, dying reader, heed the warning, I beseech you, and "flee from the wrath to come."[3] I have shown you, upon the testimony of One who cannot lie, that all men, without a single exception, as they are born into the world, need salvation, and I pray God that you will not slight this testimony. Your unbelief will not affect its truth for an instant, but as the Lord liveth, your unbelief, if persisted in, will seal your "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."[4]

[1] 2 Cor. i. 3.
[2] Lam. iii. 33.
[3] Matt. iii. 7.
[4] 2 Thess. i. 9, 10.

CHAPTER III

MAN'S SINCERITY CANNOT SAVE HIM

"For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."—*Romans* x. 2.

IT is a common opinion that it matters little what a man's religious views may be, provided he is sincere in his belief. This opinion is sometimes advanced with all the assurance of conscious truth, sometimes with all the arrogance of conscious error, and at all times with a confidence in its soundness that surprises the thoughtful mind. It is not only received as an axiom by the world, lulling the dead soul into a profounder slumber, but it is held to a lamentable extent by the Church, crippling her energies and nullifying her testimony for Jesus.

We often hear Christians apply the term "good" to those who embrace and propagate fatal heresies, simply because they appear to be honest in their convictions and labor for the advancement of various humanitarian and philanthropic schemes. Nay, in some of the most popular pulpits of the day preachers are found sneering at "creeds," and journals professedly conducted in the interest of Christ's suffering cause pour contempt through their columns upon what they are pleased to call "a dry orthodoxy." It seems to be taken for granted that the time has come to do

away with "doctrinal differences," as belonging to a former and darker age, and to substitute a polite education, a benevolent disposition, and refined manners, in place of regeneration by the Holy Ghost, faith in the Son of God, and holiness of life.

Public speakers and writers of distinction boldly avow that man is no more responsible for his belief than he is for the color of his eyes or the height of his stature; and they assume that it is the narrowest bigotry to make him an offender not only for his words, but for his very thoughts. It must be confessed that their position, viewed from an earthly instead of a heavenly standpoint, is guarded by strong defences, and it is useless to attack it except with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."[1] I do not assert that it is impregnable to the assaults of human reason, for, no doubt, arguments can be constructed which would sweep it from its very foundations; but, after all, it is only the testimony of the Sacred Scriptures, accompanied with Divine energy, that can convince the intellect, conquer the heart, and control the conduct. Some of these arguments may be briefly noticed in their proper place; but I frankly say I do not expect my readers to receive any real good from the discussion of this important subject unless they bow with implicit submission to the authority of the Bible.

The question, then, is simply this, Does God hold man responsible for his belief as well as for his conduct, or will mere sincerity, although we may sincerely

[1] Eph. vi. 17.

believe an error, entitle us to His favor? The former I affirm, the latter I deny; and I appeal at once to the inspired Book which contains the authentic decision of "the Lord of all the earth."

I. We gather from the words of the apostle which introduce the present chapter that the Jews were not only sincere in their religious convictions, but zealous, and zealous for God; and yet they were lost, for he writes: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." They had zeal, but it was not according to knowledge; and therefore it could not commend them to the regard of Him who, though abundant in love and mercy, yet desireth "truth in the inward parts."[1] The Holy Ghost informs us that they were ignorant of God's righteousness, and that they were held accountable for this ignorance; for all their efforts to establish their own righteousness were unavailing, and they were finally rejected, and sent as wanderers through the earth under the visible marks of Jehovah's displeasure. "I bear them record," says the apostle, "that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge;" and hence their sincerity did not save them.

The Saviour tells us that in the ardor of their zeal they compassed "sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made," He adds, "ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."[2] Here we see that the most intense sincerity in maintaining their religious opinions, and the most fervent devotion

[1] Ps. li. 6. [2] Matt. xxiii. 15.

in seeking to spread them abroad, could not deliver them from the fearful charge of being the children of hell, and of involving all whom they persuaded to receive their views in a common ruin. Again, our Lord wept over Jerusalem, exclaiming, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."[1] According to this solemn testimony, their crushing doom came upon them just because they *knew* not the things which belonged to their peace, and their overthrow as a nation was the result of their ignorance. Again, He said to them, "Now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God. . . . Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not."[2] They were called the children of the devil, not because they were insincere, irreligious, or indifferent to the claims of God upon their worship, but because they believed not the truth when it was made known by Him who is Truth itself.

So the apostle Peter, after boldly telling the people that they had "killed the Prince of life,"[3] says: "And, now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."[4] But did their

[1] Luke xix. 42.
[2] John viii. 40, 44, 45.
[3] Acts iii. 15.
[4] Acts iii. 17.

ignorance of Christ's true character as the anointed One, or their sincere belief that He was an impious blasphemer, atone for their stupendous crime in putting Him to death? Not at all; for the same apostle earnestly exhorts them to repent of that crime, declaring that with wicked hands they had crucified and slain Him. The apostle Paul, also referring to the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory, writes, "Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory,"[1] but their want of knowledge did not release them from responsibility, however sincere their convictions; because God has again and again announced that He will bring them into judgment for the murder of His Son.

By the mouth of the prophet Hosea, He said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee";[2] and the same principle holds good under the dispensation of grace. He "will have all men to be saved," we are told, "and to come unto the knowledge of the truth";[3] and again: "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."[4] "For some," says the apostle, "have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame."[5] "Why," asked the disciples of our Lord, "speakest

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 8. [2] Hos. iv. 6. [3] 1 Tim. ii. 4.
[4] 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. [5] 1 Cor. xv. 34.

thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."[1]

But without quoting additional statements of the same import from the inspired word, enough has been said to prove that according to the unerring testimony of God it is not a thing of small moment whether a man does or does not believe the truth. If in His infinite grace and condescension He has given us a revelation, He justly requires us to accept it as true; and our disbelief of it He justly regards and treats as a sin demanding the severest punishment. Christ is the centre and circumference of that revelation; for in its symbols and songs, in its prophecies and parables, in its doctrines and duties, it all revolves around His Divine person and atoning work on the cross, and hence our reception or rejection of the Saviour is made the turning-point in the destiny of the soul. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."[2] "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."[3] And to the same effect, He declares, "He

[1] Matt. xiii. 11–13. [2] Mark xvi. 16. [3] John iii. 18.

that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."[1]

It is a remarkable fact, deserving the serious attention of my reader, that while so many are saying, It is of no consequence what a man believes, provided he is sincere, the "LORD God of truth"[2] is solemnly saying, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life." The opinion which I am here opposing confidently asserts that it is not necessary to believe the very doctrine which our Maker declares to be essential to the deliverance of the soul from endless death! One says, He that believeth not shall be saved, if he is sincere in his unbelief; the other says, He that believeth not shall be damned. Judge ye which of these two witnesses is entitled to our confidence. "Let God be true, but every man a liar."[3] "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?"[4] "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar."[5] It comes, then, to this: either the common notion that man is not responsible for his belief is false, or the eternal Creator of heaven and earth has not spoken the truth in the Bible; for the former is a flat contradiction of the latter. The word of the Lord, the work of Christ and the way of redemption from first to last, all hold forth the necessity not only of a sincere belief, but of a belief according to knowledge: and there is no meaning nor reality in anything that is written in the Sacred Scriptures if a

[1] John iii. 36. [2] Ps. xxxi. 5. [3] Rom. iii. 4.
[4] 1 John ii. 22. [5] 1 John v. 10.

sinner can be saved by believing an error, although he may believe it with all his heart. Of the saved our Lord says in His prayer to the Father, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."[1] Of the lost it is said, they have "the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart";[2] and "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."[3]

Even the heathen who walk or stumble in the dim starlight of nature are accountable for their belief; and hence it is written, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."[4] Again: "As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified: for when

[1] John xvii. 3.
[2] Eph. iv. 18.
[3] 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.
[4] Rom. i. 18-20.

the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another;) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."[1] If then those who have no revelation in the written word are responsible according to the measure of their opportunity for knowing God, surely we who live in the unclouded glory of His grace will be called to a strict account for the manner in which we treat the messages of His love. If we reject them, the plea that we sincerely believed they were not worthy of credit will not avail to justify us at His bar; for unbelief is the result, as He declares, of unwillingness to believe; it is the crowning sin of our race; and our belief or disbelief cannot alter the nature of eternal truth. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." We are compelled, therefore, to surrender the vain conceit that sincerity will save us, or to yield our pretended faith in God's revealed word and take our proper place in the ranks of scoffers and sceptics.

II. The denial that man is responsible for his religious belief leads legitimately and logically to the conclusion that he is not responsible for his conduct: because the two sustain an intimate and indissoluble

[1] Rom. ii. 12–16.

relation to each other. One is the fountain, the other is the stream; one is the foundation, the other is the superstructure; one is the root, the other is the tree which springs from it and bears good or evil fruit. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."[1] Human actions of a moral character are always the result of certain opinions or principles; and they can neither rise higher than the source from which they spring, nor fail to partake of its nature. Good actions cannot proceed from evil principles, nor can evil actions proceed from good principles. A person's principles are himself: and surely it is a shallow philosophy which would not only divide him in twain, but array the separated portions of his being in direct opposition, pronouncing one part of him virtuous and the other vicious.

If a man sincerely believes that there is no God, he will be an atheist practically; if he believes that prayer is a vain and useless ceremony, he will never bow the knee in supplication to the throne of grace; if he believes that it is unnecessary to confess Christ before men, he will refuse to be enrolled among the number of the Saviour's disciples; if he believes that the gratification of his appetites is the highest end of

[1] Matt. vii. 16-20.

life, he will be a sensualist; if he believes that the acquisition of wealth in any manner is the supreme good, he will be a thief or swindler whenever he can feed the passion of his soul without danger of detection and punishment; and so of every other belief that is connected with our conduct as accountable beings in the unavoidable relations we sustain to our Creator and our fellow creatures. We may or may not believe the assertions of human science, the testimony of uninspired history, and the narratives of travellers in new and unknown countries, without damage to our eternal interests, because these matters do not necessarily carry our faith into the high region of morals: but the moment we invade that loftier sphere, our belief is clothed with the dread responsibility of personal action, because it is sure to express itself in outward manifestations that exhibit its character as righteous or sinful in the sight of God. If the belief is wrong, the life must be wrong; and, on the other hand, if the life is wrong, the belief must be wrong. We may say reverently, therefore, that it is impossible for the "Judge of all the earth," [1] "which searcheth the reins and hearts," [2] to take notice of the life without also taking notice of the belief which gives shape to the deeds, and tone to the speech, and direction to the behavior, of His creatures. Hence, the more sincerely an error is believed, the more surely it will receive a righteous retribution, because the more certainly it leads to open disregard of His truth or defiance of His authority.

[1] Gen. xviii. 25. [2] Rev. ii. 23.

CHAPTER IV

MAN'S SINCERITY CANNOT SAVE HIM

III

THAT man is responsible for his belief is the distinct testimony of consciousness. The process of reasoning by which this proposition may be established is simple, but direct and conclusive. That he is conscious of responsibility for his actions is almost universally admitted, and is fully attested by the sacrifices and superstitions, by the penances and prayers, by the terrors and remorse, that have marked his history in all ages and in all lands. That he is also conscious of responsibility for the dispositions of his heart is equally obvious, for they alone give moral character to his conduct; and if they are left out of view, he is no more accountable for his deeds than are the brutes that perish. Hence, if he flies into an unreasonable rage at the bidding of an unsubdued temper, when the calm of sober reflection has succeeded the storm of passion he condemns himself not only for what he has done, but for what he has felt. And our opinion with regard to moral truth being largely under the control of our dispositions, and intimately associated, as has been proved, with our moral actions, a consciousness of responsibility for our belief inevitably follows; and the moment we are awakened from the deep

sleep of sin and spiritual death by the quickening voice of the Son of God, we pass judgment upon our belief as wrong, no less than upon our conduct.

The Saviour, describing the work of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of men, says He will convince "of sin, because they believe not on me";[1] and the first experience, perhaps, of the enlightened and regenerated soul is to see that his unbelief for so many years is the most aggravated of all his iniquities. It is certain, then, that with the millions of Christians who have lived there has been a clear consciousness of responsibility for belief; and if it is not so with others, it only proves that they have fallen under the spell of a dreadful sorcery which has locked them fast in spiritual insensibility. There are multitudes who have no consciousness of sin for their conduct; but this fact, instead of showing that they are not sinners, only reveals the depth of ruin into which they are plunged. If they are ever raised out of that ruin by the exceeding greatness of God's power, they will not only perceive that they are sinful in their outward actions, but will pass an immediate sentence of condemnation against themselves for the long-cherished sin of unbelief.

Thus the apostle Paul, referring to the character of his belief before he was a Christian, says: "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which things I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received

[1] John xvi. 9.

authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them."[1] Again, he writes to the Galatians: "Ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it; and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."[2] But the sincerity of his attachment to the religious system under which he was educated, and the ardor of his zeal in upholding it, did not excuse him even at the bar of his own conscience when he received a knowledge of the truth; for years after he was saved he speaks of himself as the chief of sinners, and "the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."[3] In the light from heaven that flashed around him on the road to Damascus he saw that his conduct had been fearfully wrong; and as his conduct was the natural and necessary result of his belief, he saw that his belief had been equally wrong, and was worthy of no slighter censure than the cruelties to which it led. So will it be with you, dear reader, if God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines in your heart "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."[4]

IV. It is the judgment of mankind that we are responsible for our belief, and they hold us account-

[1] Acts xxvi. 9, 10.
[2] Gal. i. 13, 14.
[3] 1 Cor. xv. 9.
[4] 2 Cor. iv. 6.

able for it both to civil governments and at the bar of public opinion. A criminal is never acquitted on the ground that he sincerely believed the law which he had violated to be wrong, or that he sincerely believed it had been repealed, or that he sincerely believed its penalty would not be enforced. The law goes on the presumption that its subjects are acquainted with its provisions and punishments, and it requires them to answer not only for what they know, but for what they might know. It does not lay its arrest upon the idiotic or the insane to treat them as culprits, but where the moral faculty exists, associated with even a low degree of intelligence, it demands obedience to its authority under pain of its avenging justice.

Let us suppose that a law is enacted by the legislative department of the government, declaring that on and after a certain day the crime of theft shall be punished with death instead of imprisonment. Let us suppose further that this law has received the approval of the Executive and the sanction of the highest judicial decision pronouncing it to be constitutional in all its features; and, still further, that it has been fully promulgated through the press and placarded on the streets and highways. If a thief should be arrested, tried, and found guilty under this law, it would avail him little to plead that he sincerely believed it had not been decreed, or that he sincerely believed its penalty was unreasonably severe, or that he sincerely believed it would remain a dead letter on the statute-book. It is probable that all the thieves in the community would sympathize with his feelings,

and claim that there was some force in his defence; but surely every honest man would say that he was responsible for his belief and should be held to a strict account for his felony. If it can be shown that he might have informed himself of the existence of the law and the consequences of its violation, no good citizen would urge that his ignorance or his mistake should form the ground of extenuating, much less of justifying, his offence.

There are some things which a man may believe or disbelieve without receiving either commendation or censure, because the will and the dispositions of the heart are not called into exercise in accepting them as true or in rejecting them as false. We do not say that he deserves praise for believing that two and two make four; or for refusing to believe that two and two make five; or for crediting the evidence of his senses; or for relying upon the testimony of his own consciousness. In such cases the action of his mind is involuntary, so to speak, and does not depend upon his inclination or power of choice. He is obliged to believe as he does; or if, owing to some rare eccentricity, he believes otherwise, his condition is justly regarded as demanding pity rather than blame. But there are other subjects which cannot be reached by mathematical reasoning, nor perceived by the senses, nor known by intuition, and when these subjects embrace moral truth, they at once determine man's responsibility for his belief, because his belief here depends upon his will and the state of his heart.

I do not assert that he is responsible for believing

without sufficient evidence; but as evidence cannot be weighed without attention, and as the attention is subject to his control, he is responsible for directing his thoughts dispassionately, earnestly, and without prejudice, to questions that claim his regard, and that *may* at least affect his eternal destiny for weal or for woe. There are duties, for example, which arise from the various relations we sustain to our fellow creatures; and those who are too indifferent to inquire into the nature of these duties, or too depraved to care for them, or too selfish to perform them, we hold responsible for being in a condition that prevents the discharge of their social obligations. Nor is it enough to say that they are responsible merely for their conduct; because a moment's reflection will convince you that our judgment of them goes back to the state of mind or dispositions out of which their conduct naturally flows. If we know of a man who sincerely believes that he has a right to take his neighbor's property, although he may not actually steal; or of one who sincerely believes he has a right to take his neighbor's life on some slight provocation, although he may not actually kill; or of one who sincerely believes he has a right to use his neighbor's name, although he may not actually commit forgery,—we do not hesitate to say that his very belief is wrong; and we could not employ this term unless we held him responsible for his principles as well as his actions. Or if you deny this, then I immediately fasten you upon the other horn of the dilemma by showing that you cannot, with the least degree of consistency, hold

such a man responsible for his actions, which necessarily spring out of his principles; and thus this wretched theory which I am opposing, if left to work out its legitimate results, would undermine the foundations of human government and destroy the entire structure of human society.

But it is a noteworthy fact that the warmest advocates of this delusive and dangerous opinion do not pretend to apply it except in man's relations to God. None are more unsparing than they in their denunciations of what they conceive to be his erroneous political belief, or his wrong views of the standard of integrity that should be observed in business transactions, or even his religious convictions when they differ from their own. If man is not responsible for his belief, there is nothing whatever to justify them in so persistently assailing those of us who hold that he is responsible; since, according to their own notion, it is of no consequence what we believe, provided we are sincere; and if he is responsible, what becomes of their shallow conceit that he is not responsible? This alone is sufficient to condemn them; for why are they so prompt to recognize man's responsibility for his belief of the truth, save when they come to the infinitely important truth contained in the Sacred Scriptures? Does not their position confirm the testimony of the Bible when it declares that "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be"?[1] Does it not prove that they have taken counsel together "against the

[1] Rom. viii. 7.

Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us"?[1] Alas! their astounding inconsistency in holding man responsible for his opinions to themselves, while stoutly denying his responsibility for unbelief towards Christ, only reveals a guilty conscience full of fears, or a wicked purpose to throw the reins upon the neck of the transgressor and encourage him in a career of unrestrained sin.

V. An argument from analogy is suggested by the admitted fact that man is made responsible for his belief by the physical laws of his being. He sees, for example, a white powder which he sincerely believes to be harmless; but if it is arsenic, and he is rash enough to act upon his belief by swallowing it, his sincerity will not prevent excruciating pain, and probably death. An intelligent and conscientious physician may inform him that his continued dissipation will result in disease and drag him down prematurely to the grave; and although he may sincerely believe that his medical adviser is mistaken, his sincerity cannot avert the consequences of his folly and crime. He may be correctly told that a remedy has been discovered for some fearful plague which has laid its grasp upon him; but sincerely believing that his informant is mistaken, and preferring to follow the counsels of his own judgment, he may decline to act upon the testimony he has received, and yet his sincerity will not stay for a single moment the approach of the fell destroyer. He may be warned by friends

[1] Ps. ii. 3.

that a vessel in which he intends to make a voyage is not seaworthy; but sincerely believing that the warning is the expression of unreasonable prejudice or unmanly fear, he may confidently set sail, and yet his sincerity cannot deliver him from going down with a shriek into the yawning depths when the storm is let loose in its fury upon his frail craft. Without citing other illustrations of a truth so obvious that none will have the hardihood to call it in question, it may be asked why a merciful God does not respect the sincerity of His creatures in such cases, and save them from the sufferings which they bring upon themselves. If it be replied that they violate certain fixed laws, and therefore receive the merited penalty, I answer that they also violate a certain and fixed law who refuse to believe the testimony of the Son of God; and we have already proved that the Almighty will no more interfere to arrest the penalty in one instance than in the other.

No one can assert that the law of gravitation is more thoroughly established in the natural world than is the great law, as I here term it, of the spiritual world, which says, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."[1] The glorious Being who ordained both in their different spheres possesses the same adorable and unchangeable perfections whether we view Him as the God of nature or of revelation; and those, who imagine that because they are sincere they may with impunity reject or neglect the unalterable expression

[1] 1 John v. 12.

of His will, however made known, will surely discover that they have been woefully deceived. It is childish, therefore, for the objector to cavil at the harshness of the doctrine I am advocating until he first finds fault with God for the facts that occur in our daily experience and observation. If, however, he is disposed to insist that in the natural world man is responsible, not for his opinions, but for his acts, it is sufficient to remind him of what I have already shown, that it is impossible to hold religious opinions without an expression of them in acts of obedience or disobedience that at once place him among the friends or the foes of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

If any of the Hebrews on that terrible night of the passover in Egypt had sincerely believed that the blood of a slain lamb sprinkled on the door-posts of their houses could not save them from the stroke of the destroying angel, or that the Almighty was too merciful to inflict the threatened vengeance, their belief would have certainly manifested itself in their conduct, and they would have certainly perished with their enemies. If any of them, when bitten of the fiery serpents in the wilderness, had argued that there was no remedial or restorative power in looking at a piece of brass, and hence had sincerely believed that there was more wisdom in expecting help from some other source, they would have refused, of course, to obey the Divine direction; and of course they would have miserably perished because of their unbelief, however sincere they might have been.

VI. Another argument to prove man's responsi-

bility for his belief might be derived from the constitution of the human mind. As I do not wish to extend this chapter to an undue length, I shall throw out only a hint or two, which, with the blessing of God, may be profitable to the awakened soul. Even the heathen philosophers of ancient times clearly perceived that the mind is the organ of truth, as the eye is the organ of vision and the ear the organ of hearing. The jaundiced eye can impart a sickly yellow appearance to the pure white snow, and the deaf ear is dull to the most entrancing melody; but, for all that, no one doubts that they were originally constituted to be the proper organs of sight and sound. And although it is written that "the wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies,"[1] yet they were created at first with reference to truth as much as to any other end of their existence. Their minds have become sadly diseased and perverted from the use for which they were so wonderfully organized; but this fact proves their responsibility, because it is the introduction of sin which has wrought the change.

A careful observation will convince you that the vast majority of men are so absorbed in their worldly pursuits and pleasures that they are profoundly indifferent to religious truth; or they are so entirely the slaves of prejudice that they will not impartially investigate it; or they are so anxious to escape persecution and reproach in an apostate world that they are not prepared to suffer for it; or they are so blinded

[1] Ps. lviii. 3.

under the delusive influence of Satan that they do not perceive its divine beauty and inestimable value. In other words, it is manifest that they are led by the dispositions of our corrupt nature; and surely for this they are responsible, if they are responsible for anything. But they turn away from the commands of God with contemptuous unconcern, or with proud reliance upon their own wisdom, or with a fixed purpose to admit nothing as an article of faith which will abase them as helpless sinners at the cross of Calvary.

Just here their guilt comes in; for as our Lord said of the unbelieving world, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak [or, as it is in the margin, no excuse] for their sins."[1] In His blessed grace, He did not ask those to whom He presented Himself as the promised Messiah to receive Him without exhibiting His credentials, so to speak; for He says, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works."[2] A few like Nicodemus recognized the validity of the credentials, and said to Him, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him;"[3] but the great mass, offended by His lowly appearance and soul-humbling doctrines, refused to give to His claims even a candid examination. The result was, they could not believe because they would not; and they were brought to a terrible account for

[1] John xv. 22. [2] John x. 37, 38. [3] John iii. 2.

their rejection of Christ, even when they thought they did God service in despising His overtures of mercy. "Ye will not come to me," was His sad complaint, "that ye might have life;"[1] and this *will not*, which was the root of unbelief, as it still is, made them responsible for their opinions, however sincere their plea that they were unable to accept the evidences of His Messiahship. If God should command us to look at a beautiful landscape which He had created to glorify Himself and to gratify us, and we should deliberately put out our eyes, our blindness would be no excuse for disobeying His requirement. And so if we have wronged our souls and injured our minds by sin until the wonderful organ of truth which He bestowed on man at first can no longer perform its proper functions, we have ourselves to blame for groping in darkness.

"But what is Truth? 'Twas Pilate's question put
To Truth itself, that deigned him no reply.
And wherefore? Will not God impart His light
To them that ask it? Freely: 'tis His joy,
His glory, and His nature to impart.
But to the proud, uncandid, insincere,
Or negligent inquirer, not a spark."

And now, dear reader, I leave what is here written to your reflections; praying that (however imperfect the discussion of this great subject in these pages) the Lord will lead you to see the hollowness of Satan's crafty device when he would persuade you that man is not responsible for his belief. Depend upon it,

[1] John v. 40.

this is the devil's lie and not God's truth. Even under the Levitical law an offering was provided for sins of ignorance; and in the Gospel of the grace of God it is written, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"[1] although we may be perfectly sincere in our neglect. The great Bacon has well said, "Truth and goodness differ but as the print and seal; for truth prints goodness," and holiness is obedience to the truth. If man, therefore, is responsible for anything, he is surely responsible for his opinions, since they necessarily determine whether his outward life is in accordance with truth and holiness or with error and unrighteousness. "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."[2] "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."[3] "O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether."[4]

[1] Heb. ii. 3.
[2] Eccles. xii. 14.
[3] Gal. vi. 7.
[4] Ps. cxxxix. 1–4.

CHAPTER V

MAN'S RIGHTEOUSNESS CANNOT SAVE HIM

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."—*Romans* x. 3.

THE first question to be settled here is the meaning of the term *righteousness*. Some idea of the importance of the question may be gathered from the fact that the same word, which is used three times in the passage placed at the head of this chapter, occurs ninety-two times in the New Testament, and is found thirty-six times in the Epistle to the Romans. Many inquirers after the way of eternal life are kept in darkness and uncertainty from a failure to see the signification of the language employed by the Holy Ghost in the Sacred Scriptures. They might often be spared weary months of struggling, and feebleness in all their subsequent walk, if distinctly taught at the very beginning of their religious experience the precise import of such expressions as redemption, regeneration, repentance, faith, grace, justification, adoption, sanctification, and righteousness.

The last of these it is my purpose to notice at present, with the hope, through God's blessing, of leading my readers to see that their own good char-

acter and conduct cannot save them. The word which is so often translated "righteousness" in the Bible is defined in Robinson's Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament as follows: "The doing or being what is just or right; and when spoken of character, conduct, and the like, it is the being just as one should be." So the word translated righteous is explained, when applied to character or conduct, as meaning "just as it should be"; and hence a righteous man "is strictly one who does right." In the lexicons of Classic Greek the word which is translated *righteous* is rendered "observant of the rules of right, upright, in all duties both to gods and men." In the Hebrew the word translated *righteousness* comes from a verb which means "to be right, straight"; and hence in a moral sense it is "rectitude, right, righteousness, what is right and just, such as it should be"; and a righteous person is said to be one who is "obedient to divine laws." In English, Webster says *righteousness* means "purity of heart and rectitude of life; conformity of heart and life to the divine law." The term *righteous* he defines as "just, accordant to divine law. Applied to persons, it denotes one who is holy in heart, and observant of the divine commands in practice; as a righteous man. Applied to things, it denotes consonance to the divine will or to justice; as a righteous act." The word *right*, he says, means "conformity to the will of God, or to His law, the perfect standard of truth and justice. In a literal sense, *right* is a straight line of conduct, and *wrong* a crooked one."

According to these various authorities, righteousness is the state or quality of being righteous, and righteous is that which is right, and right implies some rule, standard, or test to distinguish it from wrong. If there were no such rule, it is obvious that right and wrong would lose their meaning, and the difference between them would instantly cease to exist. Whether this rule is supposed to be found in the decisions of conscience or of custom, of reason or of revelation, its authority is instinctively and universally recognized. Not only the best but the worst of men pronounce certain acts to be right and other acts to be wrong, and thus show that they have before their minds, it may be unconsciously, some rule to which the right acts are conformed, and which the wrong acts have violated. A few infidel writers like Hobbes have maintained that the only foundation of right and wrong is the civil law; and a few like Rousseau have ventured to affirm that all the morality of our actions lies in the judgment we ourselves form of them. But even these reckless sceptics confess that there is a rule, however low and imperfect, that must decide whether our conduct is worthy of commendation or of censure. Although in their view that is right which is conformed to civil law, or which meets the approval of our own judgment, still they acknowledge the existence and power of a rule to determine what should be done and what should be left undone.

Now if it be true that God has made known in the Sacred Scriptures His will concerning the way in

which He would have men feel and think and speak and act, it is certain that this revealed will is the supreme rule of duty. Of course, a Being who "is righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works"[1] cannot enjoin us to be or to do anything in the slightest degree improper or unbecoming in the relations we sustain to Him and to our fellow creatures; and as "the law of the LORD is perfect,"[2] it will at once be admitted that no higher rule is possible as the standard of right. Webster is correct, therefore, in defining righteousness as "conformity of heart and life to the divine law." The law of God is like a plumb-line (if I may so speak), let down from heaven to test the uprightness of our character and the rectitude of our conduct; it is like an exact measure applied both to our inward and outward life to discover whether it is according to holiness; it is like light shining into the chambers of our souls to reveal their real condition. If any are perfectly obedient in every respect to the requirements of the law, they are righteous, and the obedience they render constitutes their righteousness.

The phrase "righteousness of God," which frequently occurs in the inspired Epistles, next demands our consideration. We find the apostle writing to the Romans, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, . . . for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith."[3] Again, "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto

[1] Ps. cxlv. 17. [2] Ps. xix. 7. [3] Rom. i. 16, 17.

all, and upon all them that believe."[1] Again, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."[2] Again, he expresses an earnest desire to be found in Christ; not having, he says, "mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."[3] Simon Peter also sends his salutation "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."[4]

The term righteousness, when applied to God, does not so much refer to any one attribute as it denotes the perfection of His nature and sets forth the fact that He is most holy in Himself and most just in all His dealings with His creatures. The righteousness of God as used in the passages just quoted is understood by some writers to mean nothing more than God's method of justification; but that they are mistaken in their view is evident, first, because the Holy Ghost would have said God's method of justification if this had been the thought in His mind; and, secondly, because no man can be justified until there is a righteousness that precedes as the ground upon which the sentence of justification is pronounced. Wordsworth well says, "This significant phrase, *the righteousness of God*, is not to be lowered, weakened, and impaired, so as to mean only the *method of justification* by which God acquits and justifies mankind." Other writers tell us that the expression means "the righteousness

[1] Rom. iii. 21, 22.
[2] 2 Cor. v. 21.
[3] Phil. iii. 9.
[4] 2 Peter i. 1.

which God gives and which He approves"; but while this is the truth, as far as it goes, it is not the whole truth. God might give and approve a creature-righteousness such as Adam had in the garden of Eden, and such as angels possess in the paradise of heaven; but there is something better and nobler than this in store for the redeemed sinner.

"The righteous LORD loveth righteousness;"[1] and His love for it is so great that when He saw our utter destitution and extreme wretchedness, in His infinite kindness and amazing condescension He gave us His own. He gave Christ, His co-equal, co-eternal, and only-begotten Son, who was and is forevermore the true God in our nature, and who not only furnished the most illustrious exhibition of His Father's righteousness the universe has ever seen, but by His perfect obedience to all the demands of the divine law, and by His endurance of its penalty in the room and for the justification of His people, becomes their righteousness; and this righteousness is the righteousness of God Himself. It is that kind of righteousness which is worthy of admittance into His presence; and He imputes to believers the righteousness of His Son, which is only another name for His own righteousness. Hence we read such astonishing language as this: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?"[2] "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"[3] "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as

[1] Ps. xi. 7. [2] 1 Cor. vi. 2. [3] 1 Cor. vi. 3.

the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father."[1] "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name."[2] "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."[3] In other words, the righteousness of God gives a title to those who are saved to be associated with "the Prince of the kings of the earth"[4] in the most endeared intimacy and in places of highest dignity, which would be impossible if they did not stand upon the ground of a perfect righteousness before the Father, arrayed as it were in the robe of His own unsullied perfections.

The righteousness of God, then, is an expression which has a broader and deeper significance than that given to it by those who explain it to mean simply God's method of justification or the righteousness of which God is the author and approver. The law demands righteousness; and as we cannot meet the high demand, grace gives righteousness; and as it is a gift, it is bestowed in a manner worthy of God who gives us His own righteousness. Nothing less than this could satisfy the desires of His loving heart, and nothing less than this could suffice to admit us into

[1] Rev. ii. 26, 27.
[2] Rev. iii. 12.
[3] Rev. iii. 21.
[4] Rev. i. 5.

His blessed presence. If the soul has upon it the faintest stain of sin, it must be excluded forever from His glorious dwelling-place; for "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth,"[1] and only those who are righteous in the sense that God Himself is righteous can appear for a moment in the dazzling splendor of His holiness. Hence, amid the untold wonders of His creation and providence the most wonderful thing He has ever done is to impute a Divine righteousness to the believing sinner who can say, with perfect confidence: "Holy Father! there is no difference now between Thy righteousness and mine; for I am made the very righteousness of God in Christ." I need not add that this righteousness is no less enduring and immutable than is the self-existent and unchangeable nature of the Almighty; and never, never can it be torn from those to whom it has been reckoned as the ground of their justification until the eternal Jehovah shall cease to exist or be hurled from His throne.

[1] Rev. xxi. 27.

CHAPTER VI

MAN'S RIGHTEOUSNESS CANNOT SAVE HIM

IGNORANCE of God's righteousness is declared by the Holy Ghost to be as fatal and soul-destroying as the grossest wickedness, because it led the Jews and it leads others to go about the vain attempt to establish their own righteousness; and therefore they refuse to submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. You will observe that He does not charge the Israelites with insincerity, but only with ignorance; and yet practically one was as ruinous to the soul as the other. When our Lord in His sermon on the mount said to His disciples, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven,"[1] He did not accuse the scribes and Pharisees of hypocrisy as the reason for asserting that we must have a better righteousness than theirs, if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven. Some of them, we know, were hypocrites, but there is not the slightest authority for saying that all of them were practiced and wilful impostors. Saul of Tarsus, for example, tells us he was perfectly sincere in his religion when he was a Pharisee, and verily thought with himself that he ought to do

[1] Matt. v. 20.

many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth; but he afterwards informs us that he did these things "ignorantly in unbelief."[1] Surely there were others equally sincere; and I have no doubt that among the Jews of that day there were many who attained a height of creature-righteousness which has never been surpassed in the history of the world.

They counted six hundred and thirteen precepts that were binding on man, dividing them into three hundred and sixty-five prohibitions and two hundred and forty-eight commands, and were scrupulously exact in striving to observe every one of them. They read the Scriptures diligently; they prayed constantly; they kept the Sabbath strictly; they contributed systematically to support the services of God's house; they adorned themselves with all the beauties of a faultless morality and maintained an incorruptible integrity in their social relations; but even then our Lord, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, solemnly announced that their righteousness utterly failed to procure for them a title to the heavenly inheritance; "for they, being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Paul, too, assures us that, "touching the righteousness which is in the law," he was blameless before he became a Christian; and yet this boasted blamelessness could not save him, but afterwards was regarded by him as sinfulness. If, then, the testimony of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit speaking

[1] 1 Tim. i. 13.

by the apostle is to be believed on any subject, it is certain that a creature-righteousness could not save the Jews, and it is no less certain that it cannot save the Gentiles.

It has been the great purpose of Jehovah from the beginning, I may say, to teach this fundamental truth to mankind, for He stated and rehearsed it as distinctly before the coming of the Saviour into the world as He did afterwards. Thus when our first parents plucked the forbidden fruit, we are told, "the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons."[1] The violated law instantly thundered its curse against them: "Thou shalt surely die;"[2] but grace sweetly spoke in the promise of the conquering seed, and then it is added, "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins and clothed them."[3] What have we here but the insufficiency of man's righteousness as well as the precious truth of Divine righteousness taught in symbol? The attempt which Adam made with his apron of fig-leaves to cover his nakedness utterly failed, and hence he and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden; but the robe which Jehovah provided, and which told the story of the shedding of blood (as the appointed victim had to be slain before it could be presented), was Divinely perfect in its way; and when once received we read no longer of the sinner hiding from the view and voice of his

[1] Gen. iii. 7 [2] Gen. ii. 17. [3] Gen. iii. 21.

Father. Again, in the next chapter, we learn that "in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well [that is, If thou offerest properly], shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well [offerest not properly], sin lieth at the door."[1] Here we have two altars, the one laden with beautiful fruits and fragrant flowers, the product of the worshipper's honorable toil, and the expression, no doubt, of his grateful and sincere homage, while the other is dripping with the blood of a dead lamb. The difference between the two brothers did not consist in the superiority of either by nature, but in the sacrifices which they presented. The one occupied the ground of man's righteousness in his worship, and hence was rejected; the other occupied the ground of Divine righteousness, and consequently was accepted; for the Holy Ghost informs us that "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gift."[2] The offerer and the offering were identified, and stood or fell together, God regarding the former in the light of the latter, and pro-

[1] Gen. iv. 3–7. [2] Heb. xi. 4.

claiming, even in that early age, that man's righteousness cannot save him.

It would be impossible, without writing a book nearly as large as the Bible itself, to give all the statements and illustrations of this essential doctrine found in the Scriptures, for the word of God from first to last views man as hopelessly ruined in himself, and sets forth in every variety of form his need of a better, even of a Divine, righteousness to enter into life. It is true, Moses said to the Hebrews in the wilderness, "It shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us;"[1] but the little word "*if*" is very important in this connection, and the inspired history shows that they did not observe to do any of the commandments before the LORD their God as He commanded them. When they came to Sinai under the gentle conduct of grace that bare them on eagles' wings and promised to make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, "all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do;"[2] and yet scarcely had the rash vow proceeded from their lips before they were found dancing and bowing in idolatrous worship around a golden calf. Alas poor man! such is ever the end of his effort to obtain a righteousness of his own: defeat, discomfiture, disgrace, is the invariable result. Hence we hear the Psalmist exclaiming: "I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only."[3] "Who shall

[1] Deut. vi. 25. [2] Exod. xix. 8. [3] Ps. lxxi. 16.

ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? . . . He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."[1] "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven."[2] By the mouth of His prophets the Almighty says, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help."[3] "Their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD."[4] "And this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."[5]

The Old Testament, then, clearly shows how and where righteousness is to be obtained; and in every instance it entirely excludes man's righteousness as the ground upon which God pronounces the sentence of justification. "All our righteousness," it declares, "are as filthy rags"[6] (not all our wickednesses merely, for this any one is ready to admit, but all our righteousnesses are as rags, nay, filthy rags), and "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."[7]

Even the most illustrious saints whose splendid achievements are recorded in its pages are held up by the Holy Ghost in illustration, not of the value, but of the worthlessness, of creature-righteousness as the means of gaining acceptance with the Holy One of Israel. "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it [his believing God] was counted

[1] Ps. xxiv. 3, 5.
[2] Ps. lxxxv. 10, 11.
[3] Hos. xiii. 9.
[4] Isa. liv. 17.
[5] Jer. xxiii. 6.
[6] Isa. lxiv. 6.
[7] Prov. xxviii. 26.

unto him for righteousness."[1] "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works."[2] To this must be added the testimony of the selfsame Spirit in the New Testament, who says, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."[3] Again, he speaks of righteousness not as a reward fairly earned, but as a gift freely bestowed: "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men [all united to Christ] unto justification of life."[4] Again: "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law."[5] Again: "After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our

[1] Rom. iv. 3. [2] Rom. iv. 6. [3] Rom. iv. 5.
[4] Rom. v. 17, 18. [5] Rom. ix. 30–32.

Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."[1]

It is useless, however, to quote other passages bearing the same testimony, because if my readers bow to the authority of God's word they are already convinced by what has been written; and if they refuse to accept that word as true, it would avail nothing to quote the whole Bible. It is certain that there is not a line in the book in conflict with the testimony here given; and hence it is equally certain that man's righteousness cannot save him. It is true "that faith without works is dead;"[2] but this is not saying that works save; or that faith and works put together save the soul, for this would make faith itself a work. If it be true that faith without works is dead, do not forget that works without faith are also dead. "What doth it profit, my brethren," writes James, "though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?"[3] What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man *say* he hath ten thousand a year, and have it not? Can his *saying* it do him any good? Depend upon it, Paul and James speak the same things; for it is one Spirit who speaks through them both. Paul speaks of a real possession of faith; James of a mere profession of faith. Paul speaks of a faith that justifies us before God; James of a faith that justifies us in the sight of men. Paul speaks of an inward principle; James of its active development. Paul speaks of a hidden life; James of its outward manifestation. Paul speaks of a "faith which work-

[1] Tit. iii. 4–7. [2] James ii. 20. [3] James ii. 14.

eth by love,"[1] and so does James; and hence these two honored servants of the Lord are in perfect accord, only they view the same landscape from different points, and are fighting the same foe of legalism with their backs to each other. Both of them join all the holy men of God who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,"[2] in solemnly declaring that righteousness is the gift of grace, that is, of God's unmerited favor; for "by grace ye are saved,"[3] "and if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."[4]

II. Keeping in mind that righteousness, when applied to man, signifies the state or condition of being right according to the infallible judgment of God's law, a moment's reflection will show that we can never be saved in virtue of our own good character and conduct. The Holy Spirit tells us that "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."[5] If, therefore, a man expects to be saved by means of his well-doing, it is obvious that he must not only profess to do, or try to do, right, but he must actually do, and continue to do, not only some things, but all things, which are written in the book of the law. If, however, he has failed to do right, and, on the other hand, has done wrong, it is

[1] Gal. v. 6. [2] 2 Pet. i. 21. [3] Eph. ii. 5.
[4] Rom. xi. 6. [5] Gal. iii. 10.

no less obvious that he cannot be saved by his doing, whatever other ground of hope may suggest itself to his mind. "Master," said a certain lawyer to our Saviour, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."[1] Those, then, and only those, who can truthfully assert that they have always loved God with all the faculties of their being, and their fellow men as themselves, may claim to be righteous, and expect eternal life on the ground of their own righteousness. But what shall we say when we find it written in the Word of Truth, "There is none righteous, no not one,"[2] "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"?[3] Clearly, the only possible conclusion is that reached by the apostle when he argues, "Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."[4]

It will not remove the difficulty a hair's-breadth to repent and promise to abstain in the future from any violation of the law; for if such a promise could be kept for a day or an hour, could it atone for past transgressions? Suppose that a criminal, arrested after repeated offences running through a long

[1] Luke x. 25–28.
[2] Rom. iii. 10.
[3] Rom. iii. 23.
[4] Rom. iii. 20.

course of years, and put upon his trial and convicted, and asked by the judge if he had anything to say why sentence should not be pronounced against him, could only reply that he was sorry he had committed the crimes, and would hereafter conduct himself as a good citizen. Could such a plea be accepted as vindicating the majesty of violated law or as satisfying the claims of insulted justice? But the sinner has been going on all his lifetime breaking the law of God with every breath, and at every beat of the pulse; and manifestly it is the silliest delusion to expect that he will be acquitted and pronounced righteous before the high tribunal of heaven simply because he has undertaken at length to perform the duties he was required to perform from the first. But, alas! his efforts to keep the law in its true intent will be as futile as his hope of acceptance on the ground of his own works. "Thy commandment," says the Psalmist, "is exceeding broad;"[1] and it sweeps over the whole extent of our being, including the thoughts and emotions as well as the words and deeds. Our Lord, who knew the meaning of the law, declares that "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart,"[2] and the Spirit declares that "whosoever hateth his brother," though the hand may not be raised nor anger gleam from the eye, "is a murderer."[3] "Wherefore, then, serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made."[4] "Moreover, the law

[1] Ps. cxix. 96. [2] Matt. v. 28. [3] 1 John iii. 15. [4] Gal. iii. 19.

entered that the offence might abound."[1] It was never designed to give life nor to be a rule of life to a sinner with the expectation that he would keep it, but its ministry is to penetrate the soul like the sunlight streaming into a dark room to reveal the dust and defilement that had remained concealed. Hence he who has been truly awakened, and who seeks to be conformed to the law, invariably finds that it keeps ahead of his most earnest strivings, discovering impurities and iniquities of which he had never dreamed before, and often wringing from him the cry of anguish, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"[2] "If we," says the apostle John, speaking for himself and all his brethren—"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."[3] "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all;"[4] but "in many things we offend all,"[5] and therefore it is sheer madness to claim that man's righteousness can save him, because he has no righteousness, and never will have any, of his own. If, however, any are disposed to argue that, notwithstanding their imperfections, God will be merciful, and bestow eternal life for the sake of the good they have done, you observe that they shift the ground of their hope from their own doings, and really admit that their righteousness cannot save them.

III. The work of Christ shows conclusively that

[1] Rom. v. 20. [2] Rom. vii. 24. [3] 1 John i. 8.
[4] James ii. 10. [5] James iii. 2.

we need a better righteousness than we ourselves can render; "for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law;"[1] and "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."[2] Yes: he who relies for salvation upon his own works defiantly sets his opinion in opposition to the eternal counsel of Jehovah, and boldly declares that the awful scene on Calvary, when the tender heart of the immaculate and incarnate One was broken by reproach upon the cross, was altogether unnecessary. Every one must see, then, at a glance, the gross inconsistency of professing to believe the Bible, and, at the same time, denying the necessity of the atonement; for Christ and His cross form the key to unlock the meaning of the Scriptures, and constitute the all-pervading theme of its sacred pages. They exhibit in every possible form of expression the Divine person and mediatorial work of Christ Jesus, "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,

[1] Gal. iii. 21. [2] Gal. ii. 21.

to the glory of God the Father."[1] Whoever, in proud or ignorant dependence upon his good character and conduct, refuses to confess that most worthy name which raises the anthems of heaven to their highest notes, will certainly find his boasted righteousness a foundation of sand when the Lord "ariseth to shake terribly the earth."[2]

Dear reader! be persuaded, "before that great and notable day of the Lord come,"[3] to accept the perfect and proffered righteousness of Christ, which alone can stand the inspection of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire. I do not ask you to "give your heart to God," or to "enter into covenant with God that you will serve him," as the means of obtaining His favor, for this is wretched advice, although you often hear it urged. God is already favorable, and in His infinite love is holding out to your immediate acceptance a Divine righteousness,—yea, His own righteousness,—as the ground of your instant, complete, and eternal justification. Without this you may unite with any church, or with all the churches, on the face of the earth; you may be baptized in any mode, or in all the modes ever practiced; you may receive confirmation at the hands of the most distinguished ecclesiastical dignitary in the world; you may regularly partake of the Lord's Supper in the most stately cathedral and amid the most imposing ceremonies; you may bestow all your goods to feed the poor, and give your body to be burned; and after all remain the same condemned and ruined sinner you are at present.

[1] Phil. ii. 6-11. [2] Isa. ii. 19. [3] Acts ii. 20.

But now the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all, that is, it is offered to all, and it is actually upon all them that believe. The righteousness of God! What a wonderful truth! Blessed be His name, the worst need nothing better than this, but the best can do with nothing less. While such a righteousness is so generously pressed upon dying men, sad indeed it is to think of the vast multitudes who, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." I would not undervalue, in the slightest degree, the real worth of morality in its relation to human society, but do not, I beseech you, put it in the place of righteousness; for the former may shine in its brightest glory without receiving one ray from the latter to mingle with its radiance. "Covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way."[1]

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 31.

CHAPTER VII

CHRIST THE SAVIOUR OF THE BELIEVER

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."—*Romans* x. 4.

HAVING proved by the testimony of God, first, that man needs salvation, second, that his sincerity cannot save him, and, third, that his righteousness cannot save him, it may be asked by my reader, How then can he be saved? The reply to this inquiry has already been given incidentally in the passages of Scripture that were quoted for another purpose; but in the present chapter I ask your attention to the special discussion of a subject which is beyond all comparison the most important that can engage our regard. We know not how soon death may come to summon us away to our unchanging destiny beyond the grave, nor how soon the Lord may come to gather His people to Himself as a preliminary step to the infliction of terrific judgments upon the inhabitants of the earth; and surely every reasonable man must see that the question of his salvation should be distinctly, definitely, and intelligently settled without delay. Blessed be God, it may be settled instantly; for according to the same unimpeachable testimony which has established the propositions thus far advanced, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

The precise meaning of the terms in this statement is the first point that demands our notice. The word translated *end* is used in the New Testament forty-one times. The corresponding verb is sometimes rendered "to accomplish," sometimes "to finish," sometimes "to fulfil," and sometimes "to perform." When, therefore, it is said that Christ is the end of the law, we may understand that as the object of its types and the subject of its predictions He accomplished all that it announced as needful to be done; or that He finished its career in its bearing upon our salvation; or that He fulfilled its requisitions, its symbols, and its ceremonies; or that He performed the work which it exacted as essential to the deliverance of the sinner from its curse. But clearer light will be thrown upon the signification of the word if we will inquire for a moment how it is employed in other portions of the sacred volume. For example, we read in Matthew, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."[1] "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."[2] In Mark we read, "If Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end."[3] "When ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet."[4] In Luke we read, "He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his

[1] Matt. x. 22.
[2] Matt. xxiv. 14.
[3] Mark iii. 26.
[4] Mark xiii. 7.

kingdom there shall be no end."[1] "For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end."[2] In John we read, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."[3] In Romans, "The end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."[4] In Corinthians, "Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end."[5] "But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father."[6]

These quotations are sufficient to illustrate the ordinary use of the word by the inspired writers, and they show that we are to take it in its obvious sense when it is said, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The law at Sinai demanded righteousness, but grace at Calvary gives righteousness, even the perfect righteousness of Christ; and to him that believeth, the law comes to an end, and nothing remains but the righteousness of God Himself as the immovable ground upon which the believer forever stands. If a man owes a debt which he cannot discharge, and his surety pays it for him, the law comes to an end so far

[1] Luke i. 33. [2] Luke xxii. 37. [3] John xiii. 1.
[4] Rom. vi. 21, 22. [5] 1 Cor. i. 7, 8. [6] 1 Cor. xv. 23, 24.

as that debtor is concerned, because its requirements have been met and its claims satisfied, although by another, and it has no further demands upon him. If a murderer has been tried, convicted, and executed for his crime, the law is at an end in his case, because it has been honored and vindicated in the infliction of the threatened penalty, and it cannot cause the lifeless body of the felon to be again swung from the gallows. In like manner, the law of God is at an end in its bearing upon the believer in Jesus, not because it has been set aside and trampled under foot by the lawgiver, but because Christ took the place of the believing sinner, paying his debt and suffering the deadful penalty in his stead.

The word "law" in English is said to be derived from a Saxon term which signifies "to lay." Worcester is correct, therefore, in defining it as "a rule of action laid down or prescribed by a superior." The Greek word here used strictly signifies "anything assigned, distributed, apportioned; hence a usage, custom, and all that becomes law thereby; a law; ordinance." We are safe, then, in asserting that the word "law," which occurs about seventy-five times in the Epistle to the Romans, denotes the rule of action which God has laid down or assigned for the government of man in his relations to his Creator and his fellow creatures. About this rule of action a few remarks must be made that will carry us back for a moment to ground which we have previously traversed to some extent, but which it is well for us to notice again.

First, It is a rule which it is right and proper for man to observe. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."[1] "We know that the law is good."[2] It is the expression of the will of a righteous God concerning the way He would have us feel and act, and hence its requirements cannot be wrong. No one will venture to affirm that there is anything unjust or unbecoming in commanding us to love the Lord our God with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and with all the mind, and our neighbors as ourselves, and "on these two commandments," says the Saviour, "hang all the law and the prophets."[3]

Second, It is a rule which applies to the thoughts, emotions, and desires no less than to the words and deeds. We have just seen that it demands supreme, unfaltering, unceasing love to God and to our fellow men, and love exists in the heart. Hence it is written, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity [love], I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity [love], it profiteth me nothing."[4] "Love is the fulfilling of the law."[5] No man, therefore, can keep the law in its

[1] Rom. vii. 12. [2] 1 Tim. i. 8. [3] Matt. xxii. 40.
[4] 1 Cor. xiii. 1–3. [5] Rom. xiii. 10.

true intent, unless love is the sovereign principle of his soul, subordinating to its imperial and undisputed sway every aspiration and sentiment, every aim and purpose, of his being. His life may be conformed to the highest standard of human integrity, but "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."[1] "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins,"[2] and hence in His sight the look of lust is "adultery,"[3] and the secret passion of hate is "murder."[4]

Third, It is a rule which consists of two parts: a precept or command, and a penalty or punishment in case of disobedience. Without this threatened penalty it could not constitute a rule of action. We might have advice or exhortation, but law, in the sense in which the word is here used, cannot exist unless it carries with it rewards and punishments as its high sanction to encourage and enforce obedience. Human governments never lay down or assign a rule of action for the observance of their subjects until they arm it with a penalty, for the simple reason that it could not be a law at all were it not clothed with power to punish the transgression or neglect of its requirements. In the Divine government too, as a matter of fact, penalty is connected with every rule of action which God has laid down for our guidance, so far as our experience and observation extend. There are certain rules of action which apply to our bodies, as the law

[1] 1 Sam. xvi. 7.
[2] Jer. xvii. 10.
[3] Matt. v. 28.
[4] 1 John iii. 15.

of gravitation, and hygienic laws, or laws pertaining to the preservation of health. If these rules are disregarded, the penalty is inevitable. Sometimes it follows instantly, and sometimes it is long delayed, but sooner or later its relentless inflictions are sure to vindicate the majesty of broken law. There are also certain rules of action which pertain to our mental faculties, and the infraction of them entails derangement, weakness, or other forms of punishment, unless indeed a miracle is wrought to arrest the merciless operation of violated law. Still further, there are certain rules of action which are plainly intended for the regulation of our moral nature; and often, very often, we witness the fearful results of disobeying these rules in the agony, remorse, and sufferings of various kinds that overtake the wicked. Indeed, it is universally admitted, I believe, that sin is punished; while, with strange inconsistency and a feebleness of reasoning actually puerile, many argue, or rather hope and suppose, that it is punished only in the present life. They do not reflect that, if God is too merciful to punish it hereafter, He should be too merciful, according to their view, to punish it here, since it is a mere question of degree or duration. They seem to recognize the justice, or, at all events, they are compelled to acknowledge the fact, of its punishment to some extent; and how can they hesitate to accept the logical conclusion that God will deal with it in eternity as He deals with it in time, and manifest towards it His righteous displeasure forever? The wish with them is plainly father to their thought; but whatever

their desires and conjectures, it remains unalterably true that God's law has a penalty, and that every sin committed under His government will be strictly punished either in the person of the sinner or in the person of the Divine Substitute. "The wages of sin is death;"[1] and death includes all the penal evils inflicted as the consequence of sin both in this world and the world to come. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."[2] "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile."[3]

Fourth, It is a rule of action which every human being, except the man Christ Jesus, has violated. Sin is any desire, thought, word, action, or omission contrary to the law of God, and it is written, "There is no man that sinneth not."[4] "There is not a just man on earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."[5] "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."[6] "In many things we offend all."[7] "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."[8] "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."[9] The conclusion which the apostle draws from such statements as these is unavoidable when he writes: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become

[1] Rom. vi. 23. [2] James i. 15. [3] Rom. ii. 8, 9.
[4] 1 Kings viii. 46. [5] Eccles. vii. 20. [6] Rom. iii. 23.
[7] James iii. 2. [8] 1 John i. 10. [9] 1 John i. 8.

guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."[1] Yes, the plummet has been let down only to prove that there is a total lack of rectitude on our part; the straight rule has been applied to our character and conduct only to show an utter want of righteousness; the light from heaven has flashed into our souls only to reveal the defilement of our nature. It is impossible, then, that a sinner can be justified by doing the things required by the law, because he has already failed, and continually fails, to do them; and the law convicts and condemns, and curses him, as it is said, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."[2] You will observe it is not said, Cursed are some very wicked people, but, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things—not some things, but all things—which are written in the book of the law to do them; for again it is said, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."[3] If a criminal were arraigned for murder, it would avail him little to plead that he had never committed more than one murder, or that there were many other offences, such as theft and burglary, of which he was not guilty. He might be pardoned in view of his general good character, but surely he could not be justified by the law as righteous, and his pardon could be obtained only by setting the law aside. Neither can you be justified by the

[1] Rom. iii. 19, 20. [2] Gal. iii. 10. [3] James ii. 10.

law of God, my unsaved reader, if you have ever broken it in a single particular, for "the soul that sinneth [be it once or ten thousand times], it shall die."[1] You may urge that you have done no harm, but the question is not whether you have done any harm; it is whether you have done good, and nothing but good, out of the high and commanding principle of supreme and unchanging love to your Creator and your fellow men. The law does not pronounce its curse against you because you are a particularly bad person, but because you are a person at all with a nature whose essential characteristic is lawlessness.

Having considered the meaning of the term "end" and the term "law," we must now glance at the import of the word "Christ." It properly signifies the Anointed One, and is equivalent to Messiah in Hebrew, as denoting an illustrious personage who was to be anointed or consecrated to the work of salvation. From the time the promise of the woman's conquering seed was made to our fallen parents in the garden of Eden, holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost constantly uttered predictions concerning this personage, and looked forward to His coming with eager expectation. The entire economy under which they lived was so ordered that its priesthood and offerings and altar, its ark and tabernacle and temple, down to the pillars and ribands, the coverings and curtains, the bars and boards, the loops and taches, found in the sacred building, were radiant with the light of His anticipated appearing

[1] Ezek. xviii. 4.

and eloquent in His praise. He is presented throughout the Scriptures under a wonderful variety of names, among which we find Him called our Advocate, Alpha and Omega, Almighty, the Amen, the Angel of the Covenant, the Angel of Jehovah, the Apostle of our Profession, the Author of our Faith, the Beginning of Creation, Beloved, Branch, Bread, Bridegroom, Brother, Captain of our Salvation, Creator, Commander, Counsellor, Corner Stone, Covert from the Tempest, Daysman, Deliverer, Door, Elect, Ensign, End, Example, Father of Eternity, Faithful Witness, First and Last, Fountain of Life, Foundation, Friend, God, Guard, Guide, Governor, Head, Healer, Helper, Hope, Horn of Salvation, Husband, I AM, Image of God, Immanuel, Intercessor, Jesus, Jehovah, Judge, Just One, Keeper, King, Lamb, Leader, Life, Light of the World, Lion, Lord, Maker, Mediator, Messenger, Messiah, Morning Star, Passover, Peace, Physician, Priest, Prince, Prophet, Ransom, Redeemer, Refiner, Resurrection, Righteousness, Restorer, Ruler, Rock, Rose of Sharon, Root of David, Sacrifice, Saviour, Sceptre, Shepherd, Shield, Shiloh, Star, Stone, Sun, Teacher, Tower, Truth, Vine, Way, Witness, Wisdom, and Word.

CHAPTER VIII

CHRIST THE SAVIOUR OF THE BELIEVER

AND not only are these remarkable names applied to Him, many of which imply His true and proper divinity, but the attributes of God are ascribed to Him by the inspired writers without the slightest hesitation or apology. *Eternity* is said to be the measure of His existence; for it is written, "In the beginning was the Word;"[1] "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am;"[2] "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was;"[3] "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."[4] *Immutability* belongs to Him; for God addresses Him in the sublime words, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."[5] "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and

[1] John i. 1. [2] John viii. 58. [3] John xvii. 5.
[4] Mic. v. 2. [5] Heb. i. 10–12.

to-day, and forever."[1] *Omnipotence* is His; for even as Mediator, He could say, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;"[2] and He reveals Himself to John on Patmos as the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."[3] *Omnipresence* is His; for while on earth He spoke of Himself as "the Son of man which is in heaven";[4] and encouraged the hearts of His disciples with the sweet promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;"[5] "and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."[6] *Omniscience* is His; for it is said, "He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man;"[7] and Peter, led of the Holy Spirit, said to Him, "Lord, thou knowest all things;"[8] and He Himself declares, "I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts."[9]

We look a little farther and find that the works of God are ascribed to Him throughout the Scriptures; for we learn that "all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made";[10] and "by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by

[1] Heb. xiii. 8.
[2] Matt. xxviii. 18.
[3] Rev. i. 8.
[4] John iii. 13.
[5] Matt. xviii. 20.
[6] Matt. xxviii. 20.
[7] John ii. 24, 25.
[8] John xxi. 17.
[9] Rev. ii. 23.
[10] John i. 3.

him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the Church."[1] "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."[2] "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."[3] "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so, the Son quickeneth whom he will."[4] "I and my Father are one."[5] "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life."[6] "If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you,"[7] and "he shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."[8] "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations."[9] "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."[10] "Again the high priest asked

[1] Col. i. 16, 18.
[2] Heb. i. 1–3.
[3] John v. 17.
[4] John v. 21.
[5] John x. 30.
[6] John x. 27, 28.
[7] John xvi. 7.
[8] John xvi. 14.
[9] Matt. xxv. 31, 32.
[10] 2 Cor. v. 10.

him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." [1]

Once more, we find that He is the object of worship which is due to God alone, and which it is the height of blasphemy to render to the most exalted creature in the universe. When Paul and Barnabas were at Lystra, the inhabitants of that city, amazed by a miracle wrought upon a cripple, said, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men," and prepared to offer sacrifices to the strangers; "which, when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things?" [2] When John had a revelation of the Divine purpose with respect to the Church in the heavenly glory and of the world smitten by terrible judgments, he says, "I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God." [3] But when the risen Christ appeared to Thomas, that doubting disciple, who demanded the evidence of his own senses to satisfy his mind, "said unto him, My Lord and my God;" [4] and he said this without the slightest intimation that he was guilty of blasphemy in applying these high titles to Jesus. Our Lord

[1] Mark xiv. 61, 62.
[2] Acts xiv. 14, 15.
[3] Rev. xxii. 8, 9.
[4] John xx. 28.

subsequently appeared to the disciples in a mountain of Galilee where He had appointed to meet them, and it is said that "when they saw him they worshipped him";[1] and they evidently worshipped Him without rebuke, for immediately afterwards He claims universal power, and commands them to teach all nations, baptizing in His name as well as in the name of the Father and of the Holy Ghost, promising to be with them always. Nay, He tells us it is the Father's will "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him."[2] He said to his apostles, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me;"[3] and we know it is the sovereign pleasure and eternal purpose of God "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow; of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."[4] We are not surprised, then, to learn that when the martyred Stephen fell asleep he addressed his dying prayer to Christ, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."[5] Nor are we surprised to learn that the inspired writers through the Epistles constantly assert His Divinity, supplicate His blessing, and associate Him on terms of perfect equality with the Father and the Holy Ghost in the apostolic benediction, for the Father Himself sends forth the royal proclamation, saying, "And let all the angels of God worship him."[6]

[1] Matt. xxviii. 17. [2] John v. 23. [3] John xiv. 1.
[4] Phil. ii. 10, 11. [5] Acts vii. 59. [6] Heb. i. 6.

If the Being of whom all this can be truthfully affirmed is not God, surely there is no God. If He who is called by Divine names, who wears Divine titles, who possesses Divine attributes, who performs Divine works, and is represented as worthy of Divine worship, has not a Divine nature, it is simply impossible to express the doctrine of the Deity in language. I have hastily skimmed over the surface of a very limited portion of the Scriptures to establish this doctrine, but enough has been said to prove it to the satisfaction of any mind that is submissive to the authority of God's word; and I must add that its cordial reception on your part, dear reader, is absolutely essential to your salvation. Nothing can be more offensive in the sight of the Father than the denial of the Divinity of His Son; and hence He says to us by the Spirit, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed: for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds." [1] But besides the blasphemy of denying His Divinity, I may say that it becomes an absolute necessity if we are to be saved, because none but a Divine person could be the end of a Divine law. I would not hang the interests of my undying soul upon the arm of the strongest seraph in heaven; for angels have sinned and fallen from their high estate; [2] and I need, yea, I must have, the righteousness, the power, and the unchangeableness of a Divine Redeemer as the solid foundation of my hope before I can find lasting repose.

[1] 2 John x. 11. [2] 2 Pet. ii. 4.

This need is precisely and perfectly met in the person and work of "Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation [emptied himself], and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."[1] If the phrase, "took upon him the form of a servant," means that He was truly man, it is equally certain that the phrase, "being in the form of God," means that He was truly God; and if you ask me how God could become man, I reply, I do not know, nor care to know, because the blessed fact satisfies my mind and heart; and until I can tell how I raise my hand, or how a blade of grass grows, I shall not reject the glorious doctrine of the incarnation on account of its mystery. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."[2] Man's ignorance should never be weighed against God's positive testimony, and we find that this testimony was given hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus in the form of a prophecy: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."[3] Turning to the New Testament, we read, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she

[1] Phil. ii. 6-8. [2] 1 Tim. iii. 16. [3] Isa. vii. 14.

was found with child of the Holy Ghost. . . . Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us."[1] Here the voice of the Eternal is heard speaking to the proud intellect, saying, "Be still, and know that I am God:"[2] and here it is the highest province of reason to sit reverently at the manger of Bethlehem, and gaze with adoring gratitude upon the sublime mystery of incarnate love. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."[3] "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."[4]

The word "redeem," in the first of these passages, properly means to deliver by the payment of a ransom; and we know the price paid for our deliverance from the curse of the law: for the Saviour tells us "the Son of man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many."[5] In the second passage, when it is said, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," we are to understand that

[1] Matt. i. 18, 22, 23. [2] Ps. xlvi. 10. [3] Gal. iv. 4, 5.
[4] Rom. viii. 3. 4. [5] Matt. xx. 28.

the law could not give us righteousness: not that it was imperfect in itself, but because it was rendered inadequate, ineffectual, inoperative, by reason of our flesh or corrupt nature; and, therefore, God, in His amazing grace sending forth His own Son, inflicted upon Him the sentence of condemnation, not only against sins in their outward form, but against sin in the flesh, or the sin of our nature. And "now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all [that is, it is offered to all], and upon all them [that is, it is the actual portion of all them] that believe."[1] I cannot be too emphatic in reminding you that the law has not been set aside, but that it has been honored, vindicated, obeyed, satisfied, in every jot and tittle of its claims upon the believer, because "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."[2]

As another has beautifully written, "We were under the curse, because we had not kept the law; but Christ, the perfect Man, having magnified the law and made it honorable by the very fact of His obeying it perfectly, became a curse for us by hanging on the tree. Thus, in His life He magnified God's law, and in His death He bore our curse. There is, therefore, now, no guilt, no curse, no wrath, no condemnation for the believer; and albeit he must be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, he will find that judgment-seat every whit as friendly, by

[1] Rom. iii. 21, 22. [2] Gal. iii. 13.

and by, as the mercy-seat is now. It will make manifest the truth of his condition, namely, that there is nothing against him; what he is, it is 'God that hath wrought him.' He is God's workmanship. He was taken up in a state of death and condemnation, and made just what God would have him to be. The Judge Himself has put away all his sins and is his righteousness, so that the judgment-seat cannot but be friendly to him; yea, it will be the full, public, authoritative declaration to heaven, earth, and hell, that the one who is washed from his sins in the blood of the Lamb is as clean as God can make him." Yes, he is as clean as God can make him, because Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; and, as we have already seen, this righteousness which he receives through faith is the very righteousness of God Himself. The law is satisfied and can ask no more. It stood, if I may so speak, hand in hand with justice, looking upon that awful scene in Calvary where God "made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,"[1] and when they heard the cry, "It is finished,"[2] they knew that the dying Redeemer had prevailed through death "to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness,"[3] and now they join grace and mercy in extending a joyful welcome to the believing sinner.

They pursue him to the grave of Jesus, but they can go no farther, for their demands have all been

[1] 2 Cor. v. 21. [2] John xix. 30. [3] Dan. ix. 24.

met by Him who lay in the sepulchre of stone, and they come to an end, while the believer passes safely through, and stands in the new creation upon which God looks down with infinite delight and sees that it is "very good." On this side of that tomb there is nothing but sin; on the other side there is nothing but righteousness. On this side there is nothing but condemnation; on the other side there is nothing but justification. On this side there is nothing but death; on the other side there is nothing but life. Theological writers tell us that while the law is no longer the rule of justification, it is still the rule of life; but surely they have no authority in the word of God for the assertion. In their anxiety to avoid the evils of Antinomianism, or the infamous doctrine that the Christian has license to sin, they fall into the opposite error of legalism, and "put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we are able to bear."[1] When they affirm that the law is still the rule of life, if they mean that it still declares the mind of God as to what man ought to be and do, there can be no objection to the expression; but if they mean that the believer is required to walk according to this rule in order to salvation, and that he will be judged and condemned if he fails in conformity to its demands, nothing can be more false. The very ground upon which the apostle exhorts Christians to abstain from sin, and assures them that it shall not have dominion over them, is, that they "are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall

[1] Acts xv. 10.

we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid."[1] "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? . . . Knowing this, that our old man is [or rather *was*] crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. . . . Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."[2]

Elsewhere the same apostle says, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse,"[3] and no exception is made in favor of the believer. "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held [or we being dead to that wherein we were held]; that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."[4] Christ took our place under the law, and by enduring its penalty made an end of it, and henceforth He is our life and rule of life, and all in all to the saved soul. The Bible everywhere affirms that when He died we who believe also died; and when He was made alive, God "quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."[5] There the believer is now, as God views him; no longer on earth, but in the heavenly places; having a perfect righteousness because his Divine Surety has met all the demands of

[1] Rom. vi. 14, 15. [2] Rom. vi. 1, 2, 6, 11. [3] Gal. iii. 10.
[4] Rom. vii. 6. [5] Eph. ii. 5, 6.

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the law for him, and possessing the resurrection life of Jesus, which is something infinitely better than the life given to Adam in Eden.

Thus it is, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" because His righteousness, or that which He did to satisfy the claims of the law, is imputed to the believer; and if you desire to know the meaning of the term "imputed," turn to the Epistle to Philemon where the apostle, speaking of Onesimus, says, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, put that on mine account."[1] There the phrase, "put that on mine account," is precisely the same word in Greek which the apostle uses in Romans where he says, "Sin is not imputed when there is no law."[2] The righteousness of Christ, then, is *put on the account* of the believer; and whatever merits Christ has in the sight of the Father the believer also possesses. He who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners";[3] "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth";[4] who had the approval of God in "a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased";[5] who could say, "I do always those things that please him,"[6] and who "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,"[7] is no nearer to the heart of the Father than is the believing sinner. The measure of the acceptance of one in the sight of God is the precise measure of the

[1] Philem. 18. [2] Rom. v. 13. [3] Heb. vii. 26.
[4] 1 Pet. ii. 22. [5] Matt. iii. 17. [6] John viii. 29.
[7] Heb. ix. 26.

acceptance of the other. Oh, matchless grace! I do not wonder that men are so slow to believe it, for the news seems too good to be true. But it is true, for the Holy One hath said it, and it is true to every one that believeth. Believeth what? Believeth that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness; believeth that Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; believeth the testimony of God that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."[1]

Many precious thoughts here crowd upon my mind, but I must not give utterance to them at present, for I have already made this chapter too long. The discussion of belief will come up again, if the Lord will, and I cannot dwell upon it now. I merely wish to say that when men tell you *to do anything* to be saved they are preaching the law and not the Gospel. You have only to believe; and believing is not doing: it is the opposite of doing; it is simply receiving, and resting on the finished work of Christ which is already done, and done more than eighteen hundred years ago. The sin-hating God met the sin-bearing Jesus at the place of a skull, and there once and forever settled the question of the believer's salvation, and we had nothing to do with it. Now the glad tidings are sent forth to the ends of the earth: "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law

[1] 1 John i. 7.

of Moses."[1] *Are* justified: mark that. They are already justified; and they cannot be partly justified and partly unjustified, partly saved and partly unsaved. If they believe that what God has said about His Son is true, and true for them, as it is for any other sinner, they have at this present moment a perfect righteousness, and there is not one condemnation against them. What, then, do these doubting believers mean, if I may be allowed to use such an expression as doubting believers? If their doubts are true, God is a liar, but if God is true their doubts are liars; for He hath said, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

[1] Acts xiii, 38, 39.

CHAPTER IX

NO HOPE FOR THE SINNER IN THE LAW

"For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them."—*Romans* x. 5.

THERE are only two ways by which men expect to enter heaven. One is by *doing*, the other is by *believing*. We often hear doleful and sometimes unmeaning complaints about the great diversity of religious opinions in the world, but all systems of faith can be readily reduced to the two already mentioned. In the one class we must place that vast multitude without the pale of the Christian Church who, acknowledging in general terms the existence of God and a future state of rewards and punishments, seek to win the approval of their Creator by their amiable character, or by their upright conduct, or by certain acts of worship sanctioned by custom or suggested by conscience. To these must be added that vast multitude within the pale of the Church who seek to win the approval of their Creator by their prayers, or good works, or reception of what are called the Sacraments. I am not here referring to any particular denomination of professing Christians, but to all in every denomination who rely upon anything whatever that they have done or can do to be saved.

They agree precisely with the former class, and stand upon precisely the same ground, and are doomed to the same end; for the unbelievers are to have their "portion with the hypocrites,"[1] and the hypocrites are to have their "portion with the unbelievers."[2] If the one will be saved by well-doing, so will the other, unless it can be shown that God has promised eternal life for a special kind of well-doing; but if the one will be lost for refusing to rest simply and solely upon the finished work of Christ, so will the other. The fact that some are members of the Church and some are not does not change in the slightest degree the principle on which they act, and which in both cases is the principle of *doing* as the procuring cause of salvation. One man hopes to be saved because he pays his just debts, or because he is honorable in his business transactions, or because he is a faithful husband, an indulgent father, and a kind neighbor, or because he contributes his money, example, and energies to advance the welfare of the community and country in which he lives. Another man hopes to be saved because he has been baptized in what he supposes to be an authorized form and by an authorized minister, or because he has partaken of the Lord's Supper, or because he goes to church, or because he tries to live up to the rules of the ecclesiastical body which he has joined and does his part in promoting the interests of that body.

It is obvious that these two men do not differ with respect to the principle which underlies their hope of

[1] Matt. xxiv. 51. [2] Luke xii. 46.

salvation, for they depend alike upon their own doing to be admitted into the glorious dwelling-place of God when called to leave the world. One may utterly reject the Divine authority of the Bible, and the other may be a Presbyterian, or Baptist, or Congregationalist, or Methodist, or Episcopalian, or Roman Catholic, or known by any other denominational title; but it is clear that they build upon the same foundation and must stand or fall together. If you ask for the reason of their expectation that they will be saved, you will find that in both cases they rely on something that they have *done*, or are *doing*, or intend to *do*, and hence the ground of their hope, so far as they put themselves to the trouble of forming any distinct views of the subject, is one and the same, whether they are in or out of the Church. It is to be feared that there are thousands in all the churches who would listen with blank amazement to the solemn direction of the Holy Ghost, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you;"[1] but when we are able by close questioning to arrive at that reason, it amounts to nothing more than this: they were taught to believe that they are sinners, and sometimes a slumbering conscience wakes up long enough to confirm the teaching; and influenced by the example and wishes of parent, or husband, or wife, or friend, they made a profession of religion, as it is significantly called. They are not happy in their relations to God, who is an object of dread or indifference, and hence they

[1] 1 Peter iii. 15.

think it wise to do something to secure them against punishment in the eternal world in case of sudden death, while their tastes, aims, and aspirations centre with supreme regard about the present world. I have known Christian mothers to take great comfort from the fact that their daughters, after a night of God-forgetting and God-defying revelry, were pious enough to say their prayers before retiring to rest; and the poor deluded daughters really fancy that they have done something to cause the sleepless eye of Jehovah to look upon them complacently.

Upon ministers of the Gospel—nay, ministers of the law, I should term them—largely rests the responsibility for this lamentable state of things; because in reply to the earnest question of many an anxious soul, "What must I do to be saved?"[1] instead of answering in the language of the apostle, and preaching the good news of God's love and of a finished salvation to the believer, they tell the inquirer to be confirmed, or to unite with the Church, or to enter into covenant with God to serve Him, or to keep on praying and striving, and thus put the dead sinner on a course of worthless doing. "They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."[2] God knows I do not desire to express myself harshly; and surely I can have no wish to excite the enmity and call forth the opposition of those who are warmly attached to their religious teachers and to the systems of religious faith in which they have been educated;

[1] Acts xvi. 30. [2] Matt. xv. 14.

but the interests involved in this discussion are too precious to allow the use of honeyed phrases concerning men who claim to be "the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation."[1] "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."[2] "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them."

If then a man expects to obtain righteousness by the law or by the principle of doing, he must do the things required by the law. It is not enough that he tries to do them; or that he promises to do them; or that he is sorry because he has not done them; or that he does some of them; but he must actually do, and do without faltering, and do all the things demanded by the law, or a voice breaks like thunder above his head, saying, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."[3] God, who gave the law and knows why He gave it, has also said, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."[4] "And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice, . . . Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them; and all the people shall say, Amen."[5] Even the incarnate One who came on a mission of love and salvation to our lost race solemnly declared, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot

[1] Acts xvi. 17. [2] Isa. viii. 20. [3] Gal. iii. 10.
[4] James ii. 10. [5] Deut. xxvii. 14, 26.

or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."[1] The law, therefore, cannot lower its demands to humor the caprices or to suit the necessities of the sinner, for then it would be no law at all. It is an unalterable expression of the will of God concerning the duty of man, and it remains forever the same in its holy precepts and in its dread penalty, whatever may be our state. Human laws are often repealed; or changed in some of their principal features; or suffered to lie on the statute book as a dead letter; because the legislators and the executive are frequently ignorant, passionate, fickle, and powerless to enforce their decrees; but the Divine law, as we have already seen, is perfect; and the Divine Lawgiver has all the resources of the universe at His command to do His bidding. Hence it is written, "If the word [that is the law] spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"[2]

The law, we here learn, is steadfast, stable, firmly established; and every transgression—not only some gross and enormous transgressions, but *every* transgression and disobedience—is sure to receive a just recompense of reward; "for the wages of sin is death."[3] What hope, then, can the *sinner* derive from the law or from reliance upon his own doing to be saved? None whatever. The righteousness which Moses describeth, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them, most clearly can be of no avail to the

[1] Matt. v. 18. [2] Heb. ii. 2, 3. [3] Rom. vi. 23.

man who has not done them. The promise is only to him who doeth them, and not to him who fails to do them. If any can be found who have perfectly obeyed the requirements of the law in thought, emotion, word, and deed, they may begin to speak of winning heaven on the principle of doing; but if it can be proved that all, without exception, have disobeyed these requirements, it follows, so far as the law is concerned, that it condemns and curses the entire human family, and demands that the threatened penalty shall be inflicted.

I am not now speaking of the adorable grace and unsearchable wisdom of the Lawgiver in providing a substitute upon whom the penalty descended, instead of upon "his people which he foreknew," but my aim is to call the attention of the reader to the fact that if his reliance for salvation is upon keeping the law or upon his own doing, he is utterly helpless and hopeless. Law knows no mercy. Its whole office is discharged when it lays down a rule of action and promises to justify or to declare righteous those who conform to this rule, with the fearful alternative of punishment if the rule is violated in the slightest particular. They, then, know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm, who dismiss the tremendous realities of eternity from their attention with the flippant remark that they will be saved if they do the best they can. Even if this were true, there is not an honest man in the world who will dare say, in the presence of the holy God, that he has always done the best he could. The general confession contained

in the Episcopal prayer-book, "to be said by the whole congregation after the minister," might well be said by the whole human race in the humble acknowledgment: "Almighty and most merciful Father: we have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us." Not only have we left undone many things which we ought to have done, but many things which we might have done; and not only have we done many things which we ought not to have done, but many things which we might have avoided. This, I am sure, every candid and intelligent person will promptly admit, and hence those who claim that they will be saved if they do the best they can must see, after a moment's reflection, that they will have no ground upon which they can stand in the Judgment.

But I will go a step farther and say that if my reader were able from the hour his eye falls upon these lines to abstain entirely from sin, he could not be saved in virtue of his own doing. Yes, I will take it for granted, for the sake of argument, that henceforth he can perfectly keep the law of God in thought, word, and deed; and, after all, he must inevitably be lost if his dependence is placed on his own good character and conduct; "for Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which

doeth those things shall live by them." He does not say that the man which doeth those things part of the time, but all the time; for if life is to be earned on the principle of doing the things required by the law, they must not be left undone, but done. If they are left undone once or for a single instant, all hope of being saved by doing is gone, and gone forever. Suppose, then, that when judged by the law you could truthfully claim that you had strictly observed all its commands for ten, twenty, or thirty years, the Judge would very properly reply, Why did you not observe them all the time? What were you doing the many years previous to your observance of them but committing sin continually? According to your own showing, you have utterly failed in your duty, and as you prefer to be judged by the law, O sinner, you are condemned. "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." [1]

What would be thought of a court of justice which would justify or declare righteous a man arraigned at its bar on the ground that, although he had committed innumerable crimes through a long series of years, he had subsequently reformed and become an upright citizen? The chief executive might possibly pardon him in view of his reformation, but he could not do it without setting the law aside; and surely he could not pronounce him a righteous man, or right according to law. But God can never set His "holy, just and good" law aside, nor can He fail, as has been

[1] Matt. xxv. 30.

previously shown, to punish sin; and therefore, if the sinner could be obedient hereafter in every respect to the demands of the law, his subsequent good conduct could not possibly atone for his former bad conduct, nor exempt him from the penalty which is denounced against "every transgression and disobedience."

But it adds immensely to the embarrassment of the sinner, and still further proves that there is no hope for him in the law or upon the principle of doing, when we remember that, strive as he may, he will continue to sin. Admitting that he can wholly abstain from transgression by the strength of his will, and resolutions, and vows, and efforts, the law cannot possibly justify him, because he has already disobeyed its precepts, and he cannot with his utmost endeavors do more than it requires; so that he comes short of his duty although he should never again be guilty of a single offense. How helpless, then, is his condition when he discovers by sad experience, as he surely will discover, that the good which he would, he does not, and the evil which he would not, that he does! When, aroused from his death sleep by the quickening voice of the Son of God, he undertakes to *do* something to be saved and flies to the law for refuge, he finds to his amazement that he had not known before the hidden evils of his heart. He is like a man who dwells in a dark room and imagines that it is clean, until the law enters like the sunlight and reveals the dust and defilement lying all around. He is like a man who thinks in his intoxication that he is pursuing a straight path, until the law comes, like a perfect

rule, and shows him how crooked his ways have been. "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." [1]

I am but stating the experience of all, without exception, who have earnestly and resolutely tried the law, or the principle of doing, in order to be saved, when I say that a miserable failure has been the uniform result; and it is owing to my anxiety to save you this bitter experience, dear reader, that I dwell so much upon a point which may seem to you of little importance. How many sincere souls might be spared months and years of gloomy despondency and harassing fears if taught at the beginning of their religious experience the utter uselessness and worthlessness of their own doing! You remember that when our blessed Lord was on the earth, "there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Observe that, like sinners now, he wanted to *do* something, and the Saviour met him on his own ground. It is as if He had said, You ask what you must *do;* and, since you are determined to seek salvation by doing, "thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother." You will notice that Christ takes him only to that part of the ten commandments which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves, and does not refer

[1] Rom. vii. 7.

to that higher part which requires us to love God with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and mind; because the former was sufficient to disclose to the inquirer the deceitfulness of his heart. "And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." If he really loved his neighbor as himself, why did he wish to retain his immense wealth and leave others around him wretchedly poor, when, if he had been poor and they rich, he would have desired to share in their abundance? "And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions."[1] Alas! with all his doing that made him so amiable and attractive, he had not complied with the spirit of the second table of the Decalogue, to say nothing of the first. My reader, if you really insist upon trying to be saved by trying to keep the law, you will discover that it will baffle your best efforts, and outstrip your most arduous pursuit of holiness, and more and more reveal the abyss of ruin in which you are plunged, and drag from their secret lurking-places in your soul sins of whose existence you have probably been ignorant.

[1] Mark x. 17–22.

CHAPTER X

NO HOPE FOR THE SINNER IN THE LAW

WHAT, then, will you do? Go to the Church to save you? Poor sinner! how can the Church save you when it is nothing, as its name implies, but an assembly of sinners called out from the world to be the witness of the grace that has plucked them as brands from the burning? I verily believe that there is nothing about which there is such mischievous confusion of mind and such horrible darkness as concerning "The Church." If the Church saves, pray in what part of it is salvation found? Is it in the preacher, or the people, or the services? Do you not perceive at a glance that in going to the Church for salvation you are going back to the law and to this fatal principle of doing? Do you not see that you are guilty of blasphemy in transferring the perfections of Jehovah, whose high province and sole prerogative it is to save, to sinful creatures like yourself? Take heed, I beseech you, how you put your trust in the Church, lest you should be aroused by the terrors of the judgment to the frightful discovery that you have been building your hope of life on a foundation of sand. There is not a church organization on earth that has not departed from the simplicity and purity in doctrine and practice of the Gospel standard; and

inasmuch as the Lord has plainly revealed that all these ecclesiastical systems are to perish amid the crash and wreck that will close the present dispensation, he who expects to be saved in virtue of his connection with any body of professing Christians will feel the ground on which he stands give way as with the throes of an earthquake, and no resting-place shall be found for his soul. God forbid that I should disparage the real Church, or the assembly of the saved which constitutes the mystical body, and by and by will be manifested as the beautiful bride, of the King of kings; but woe to him who hangs his hope of eternal life upon her impotent arm! He is ascribing to the creature the power and grace that belong only to the Creator and deludes himself with the vain confidence of the Jews, in the days of the apostles, when they lost sight of Christ to trust for salvation in circumcision and other appointed ordinances. The Church, however imposing her ceremonies and however exalted her dignitaries, is composed of sinners who, believing in Jesus, "are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit;" [1] and it would be a strange thing indeed if the saved could become the Saviour in any other sense than to testify of His redeeming love and of the infinite merit of His atoning blood.

But I will go a step farther with my argument and assert that there could be no hope for the sinner, in the law or on the principle of doing, even if he were able to abstain entirely hereafter from the transgres-

[1] Eph. ii. 22.

sion of the commandments; and even if he were able to say truthfully that he has never in the past violated one of these precepts; and even if he were able to discover a Church exactly conformed in all respects to the apostolic standard, and should become the most prominent leader in its services. When you read this assertion, do not, I pray you, throw the book contemptuously down, but, however offensive it may be, at least consider what I have to say in its support. I would not thrust a bony and cold-blooded theology at you to haunt your dreams like a spectre, and I have as little relish as you can possibly have for those nice hair-splitting distinctions in doctrinal statement that are of no practical value to the soul. But, dear reader, I am dealing with a solemn truth and a tremendous fact when I repeat that if your outward life were perfectly blameless, and if you were a distinguished member of the only true Church on the face of the earth, could you find such a body, you would still need something else before obtaining a scriptural hope of salvation. My authority for this declaration is found in the oft-repeated testimony of the word of God that our *very nature is sinful*, and hence our Lord, as if addressing each person belonging to our race, distinctly affirms, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee"—I who can neither deceive nor be deceived—I who came down from heaven to die in the room and stead of lost men—"I say unto thee, Except a man [except any one, every one] be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."[1]

[1] John iii. 3.

Those who reject the finished work of Christ as the only ground of their hope may cavil as much as they please at these words; but there they stand forever in the Sacred Scriptures, and no impious hand can tear them from the Bible, and no ingenious criticism can force them to signify mere reformation or the reception of rites and sacraments. When the blessed Saviour said, "Ye must be born again,"[1] He obviously meant just what He said, and not something He did not say. We have been born once,—born of our earthly parents,—and now we must be born again, or we cannot see the kingdom of God. The way in which we are born again is very simple, and the Lord states it in language that cannot be misunderstood when He says, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."[2] Whosoever believeth, then, has eternal life, and whosoever has eternal life surely sees and enters the kingdom of God: so that whosoever believeth is born again. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."[3] God *loved* and *gave*, and we *believe* and *have;* and this is all of it in order to attain life and experience the new birth. To the same effect we read, "As many as received him [Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will

[1] John iii. 7. [2] John iii. 14, 15. [3] John iii. 16.

of man, but of God."[1] "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."[2] "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."[3] "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature,"[4] or, as it might be rendered, he is an unimpaired, uncontaminated creation. In other words, he is born again; and no one has the right to say that we can be born only once. Indeed, unless we are born a second time, born from above, born of God, it is certain that we can never see heaven; for the old nature which we inherit from fallen Adam cannot be admitted into the presence of the Holy One of whom it is written, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity."[5] "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," says Jesus, "and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."[6] The birth, then, is as real and literal in one case as in the other, and the one is no more mysterious than the other.

It is upon such statements as the last quoted I rest the important doctrine that there is no hope for the sinner in the law, even if he is and always has been perfectly conformed to its precepts in his outward life; and even if he faithfully goes through the whole round of religious observances required by the Church. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and our Saviour obviously designs to teach us that it can never be anything but flesh, while that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and can never be anything but spirit. The word *flesh*, which is often used in the Bible to de-

[1] John i. 12, 13. [2] 1 John v. 1. [3] Gal. iii. 26.
[4] 2 Cor. v. 17. [5] Hab. i. 13. [6] John iii. 6.

note mankind, is also frequently employed to set forth the fact that man is corrupt and depraved; as it is written, "God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth."[1] Keeping in view this universal corruption which is characteristic of the human race, it is easy to see why the Holy Ghost directed the inspired writers to describe our fallen, sinful nature, as we are born into the world, by the term flesh. The Apostle Paul says, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing."[2] "With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."[3] "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded [or the minding of the flesh] is death; but to be spiritually minded [or the minding of the spirit] is life and peace."[4] "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."[5] "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."[6] "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like."[7] "They that are

[1] Gen. vi. 12. [2] Rom. vii. 18. [3] Rom. vii. 25.
[4] Rom. viii. 5, 6. [5] Rom. xiii. 14. [6] Gal. v. 16, 17.
[7] Gal. v. 19–21.

Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."[1] "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."[2]

These quotations, taken from two of the Epistles, prove that the word *flesh*, very often, at least, indicates the depravity and sinfulness of our nature; and they still further prove that the nature we inherit from fallen Adam remains depraved and sinful to the end of life. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and do what you will with it, you can never make anything of it but flesh. Adorn it with all the charms of the most attractive morality, beautify it with all the graces of the most refined culture, and still it remains flesh. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"[3] Can you by any amount of care and industry cause thorns to produce grapes or thistles to bring forth figs? This may be done just as soon as flesh can be turned into spirit, or that which is inherently and essentially sinful can be changed into holiness. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then," says the Lord, "may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."[4] In other words, neither in the case of the Ethiopian, nor the leopard, nor the sinner, can the nature be changed into another nature. A new nature may be imparted or a new creation wrought by the power of the almighty, but the old nature will be the old nature still. Hence the Bible in describing

[1] Gal. v. 24.
[2] Gal. vi. 8.
[3] Matt. vii. 16.
[4] Jer. xiii. 23.

the way of salvation does not represent it as due to certain moral influences which God brings to bear upon the soul, but to "the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power [or the energy of the might of his power] which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."[1] Nothing short of the highest exercise of Divine power can avail to raise us out of the profound abyss of our misery, because our nature is helplessly sinful and hopelessly ruined. God's judgment of our state by nature is contained in His own solemn declaration, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;"[2] and it will give the full force of this declaration to remember that the word translated "desperately" is rendered "incurable" and "fatal" when applied to a disease or a wound. Man's nature then is *incurably* wicked, it is *fatally* injured; and, therefore, in the promise of salvation which the Lord addresses to Israel, He says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."[3] The psalmist, taught by the Holy Ghost, prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God;"[4] and neither he nor any other of the inspired writers ever use the unscriptural phrase, "a change of heart," which we so often hear in our pulpits and read in our religious books.

The phrase is objectionable because it implies that the new birth does not consist in the imparting of the new

[1] Eph. i. 19, 20.
[2] Jer. xvii. 9.
[3] Ezek. xxxvi. 26.
[4] Ps. li. 10.

nature, but in the improvement or reformation of the old; and for this view I am satisfied there is no foundation whatever in the word of God or in Christian experience. On the other hand, it is written, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." [1] Here we are told that the carnal mind, the fleshly mind, that which is born of the flesh, man's nature, is not only an enemy, but enmity itself against God, and that it *cannot be* subject to the law of God. "So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." [2] The carnal mind, or the flesh, or the old nature cannot, therefore, be changed or improved; for then it could become subject to the law of God and please Him, which is here declared to be impossible. Again: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;" [3] and if the natural man can neither receive nor know the things of the Spirit of God, it seems to be quite certain that the Spirit of God is not changing, improving and reforming the natural man or man's old nature. Again: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other;" [4] and if this perpetual conflict is going on between the two, how can it be said that the Spirit is gradually transforming the flesh or the old nature into His own likeness? Again: Christians are exhorted to "put off," not change or reform,

[1] Rom. viii. 7.
[2] Rom. viii. 8.
[3] 1 Cor. ii. 14.
[4] Gal. v. 17.

but *put off*, "the old man, which is corrupt [mark it, *is* corrupt], according to the deceitful lusts;" and to "put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."[1] Again: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature"[2] (or new creation).

In the light of these clear statements, and of many others like them that could be quoted if necessary, we are compelled to see that the nature we have inherited from fallen Adam is totally ruined. There is not, according to the vain thought of many, a little good in man as he is born into the world, "for I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing,"[3] and in God's sight, "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."[4] He is not like a ship whose sails have been split by a storm and whose masts have been splintered by the lightning, so that it needs repair; but like a shattered wreck upon the shore. A new vessel must be built. He is not like a musical instrument whose strings have become discordant by the violence of some rude clashing hand, but like one broken to pieces. A new instrument must be constructed. He is not like a temple whose altar is desecrated, whose walls are defaced, and whose pillars have been dismantled of their beauty; but the magnificent edifice that once reflected the glory of the Godhead now lies a shapeless mass of worthless rubbish, the fit abode of unclean birds and venomous

[1] Eph. iv. 22, 24.
[2] Gal. vi. 15.
[3] Rom. vii. 18.
[4] Gen. vi. 5.

reptiles; and a new building must be reared. Our nature is like a human body full of "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment:"[1] and the Holy Ghost did not come down in witness of the ascension of Christ, to inhabit such a thing as this, and seek its improvement. It has been cast out as vile; and not only has the righteous sentence of its doom been pronounced, but it has been executed; for "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Blessed be His name, He struck at the very root of the evil, at sin in the flesh or in our nature; and yet, in His adorable grace, the blow fell not upon us, but upon His own Son, "for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."[3]

Sin, then, in its broadest and deepest sense, including both actual transgressions and the depravity of our nature, has already been judged and condemned and punished, so far as the believer is concerned, in the person of Jesus Christ, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree;"[4] who "appeared to put away sin [not sins only, but sin, the poisonous root down in our nature] by the sacrifice of himself;"[5] and on the ground of that ample and atoning sacrifice, the Holy Ghost proceeds to impart a new nature, to give a new life, to form a new creation in Christ through faith in His name as He is made known to

[1] Isa. i. 6. [2] Rom. viii. 3. [3] 2 Cor. v. 21.
[4] 1 Pet. ii. 24. [5] Heb. ix. 26.

us in the Gospel. But, dear reader, you are laying up for yourself much sorrow and trouble if you fail to remember that the "flesh" in a Christian is no better than the "flesh" in an infidel. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and on becoming "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," we do not cease to become the children of Adam. It is true that "ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you;"[1] but it is equally true that the flesh is in you; and you will find it to be the same flesh that it was before you believed the testimony of the Gospel, and were thus "born again." Forgetfulness or ignorance of this fact has cast many young believers, and many old ones too, into the depths of despondency, and made them all their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death. They have been taught to expect a gradual change and increasing sanctification of the old nature until, as I have heard eminent ministers express it, the Spirit puts the finishing touch on the Christian in his dying hour, who is thus made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Now the fact is, he was made meet the moment he was in Christ by faith; for the apostle, in behalf of all Christians alike, gives "thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;"[2] and as to the gradual change and improvement of the old nature, I boldly challenge the experience of every intelligent, thoughtful believer to testify whether it is not the merest delusion.

[1] Rom. viii. 9. [2] Col. i. 12.

Does he find that it is a whit better after ten, twenty or forty years than it was the day he confessed Christ? Nay, does he not find that it is precisely the same, except that there is a growing conviction of its exceeding sinfulness? True, he may be enabled through the indwelling Spirit to subdue it more thoroughly, but unless it is constantly "mortified" and "kept under," it will spring up in all its original deformity, and obscure the shining of the new nature. Careful observation also will convince you that a Christian carries with him, along the whole progress of his earthly journey, the same characteristics, the same peculiarities, the same nature he had previous to his conversion; and though it is now hated and held down, ever and anon it rises into view, and, when faith falters, extorts the cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"[1] If it is the fact that the old nature of the Christian must undergo this gradual and progressive change for the better, it is unaccountable that the most abandoned sinners, like the dying thief, sometimes pass in an hour from the lowest depths of iniquity into the paradise of God; and that the most devoted saints, like David, are guilty of fearful falls that leave a dark stain on the record of their lives; since, according to the theory that the old nature ceases to be what it was, there should not be found in it any power to lust, or to plan a murder, or to commit any other heinous sin. It is astonishing, therefore, that so many excellent ministers of the Gospel persist in speaking of regeneration as a

[1] Rom. vii. 24.

change wrought in the old nature until it reaches perfection at the moment of death, when their views are not only directly in the face of the Scriptures, but flatly contradicted by the experience and observation of their hearers.

The preachers of a former age, when a sounder theology prevailed, spoke far otherwise, as did Ralph Erskine, who was in the habit of calling the Christian "half devil and half saint;" and as did Stillingfleet, bishop of Worcester, England, in the seventeenth century, who wrote, "In an unconverted person there is but one nature; in a real Christian there are two natures; the one is called the flesh; the other the Spirit." This I think expresses the precise difference between the unbeliever and the believer; the former has but one nature, while the latter has two natures; but of course I do not mean to say he has two souls. The second man, the Lord from heaven, has two natures in one person, dwelling together without admixture, change, or confusion, yet He has but one soul. Webster defines the word *nature* as "the essence, essential qualities, or attributes of a thing, which constitute it what it is;" and I affirm that "the essence, essential qualities, or attributes" which belong to man when he is born into the world continue with him unchanged to the end; and that when he is born again another thing is communicated to him, "the essence, essential qualities, or attributes" of which link him to God and constitute him truly a child of God. Of the one nature it is written, "he that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the begin-

ning."[1] Of the other nature it is written, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."[2] Of the one it is written, "The old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."[3] Of the other it is written, "The new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."[4] Of one it is written, "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them."[5] Of the other it is written, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world."[6]

The sharp and unchanged contrast between the two natures as presented in the Bible might be continued at great length, but enough, probably, has been said to convince you that if you are looking for the gradual sanctification of the old nature, instead of trusting in the accomplished sacrifice of Christ, you will be woefully disappointed. You will find that the old nature remains the old nature in spite of all your struggles and tears and vows. "No man putteth a piece of new cloth into an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."[7] If men are not guilty of the folly described here by the Saviour, neither is the Lord; for He just casts aside the old

[1] 1 John iii. 8. [2] 1 John iii. 9. [3] Eph. iv. 22.
[4] Eph. iv. 24. [5] 1 John iv. 5. [6] 1 John v. 4.
[7] Matt. ix. 16, 17.

garment, the old bottles, the old nature, as condemned and worthless, and gives unto us "exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature,"[1] and "in Christ a new creation." It is all in Christ, for "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affection and lusts."[2] "Knowing this, that our old man is [was] crucified with him."[3] "I am [have been] crucified with Christ."[4] The scene of this crucifixion is not in ourselves—as so many imagine, to their own perpetual discomfort and sorrow—but it was on Calvary, for when Christ was crucified the believer was crucified; when Christ died the believer died; when Christ was buried the believer was buried; when Christ was quickened the believer was quickened; when Christ arose the believer arose; when Christ was seated in the heavenly places the believer was seated together with Him, forever past condemnation, and judgment, and death, and standing in the light and glory of the new creation, an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ, saved now and saved forever.

This will come up again more fully hereafter, but for the present I ask you to consider that if you were perfectly obedient to the law in your outward life, and if you were the most prominent member of what is called by various denominations the only true Church, you would require something else as long as the old nature remains the old nature, and as long as it is true that "ye must be born again." The worst need noth-

[1] 2 Pet. i. 4.
[2] Gal. v. 24.
[3] Rom. vi. 6.
[4] Gal. ii. 20.

ing more than this, but the best can do with nothing less. Thanks to God, there is nothing, nothing whatever, between the worst of sinners and the gracious Saviour, as I shall now proceed to show.

CHAPTER XI

NOTHING BETWEEN THE SINNER AND THE SAVIOUR

"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above.) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh unto thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach."—*Romans* x. 6–8.

THE law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."[1] The law says, Do and be saved; grace says, Believe and be saved. The law says, Do and live; grace says, Live and do. The law says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;"[2] grace says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom."[3] The law says, "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die: so shalt

[1] John i. 17. [2] Ezek. xviii. 4. [3] Job xxxiii. 24.

thou put away evil from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear."[1] Grace says, concerning the wretched prodigal, although "stubborn and rebellious," a "glutton and a drunkard," that "when he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."[2] The law says, "Lay hold on him;" grace says, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him."[3] The law says, "Stone him;" grace says, "Put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet."[4] The law says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;"[5] grace, speaking only of believers, says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."[6]

This shows us precisely how we are delivered from the curse of the law, for it is said, "Christ hath redeemed us, being made a curse for us." He was "made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."[7] The law, therefore, has not been set aside, but satisfied. It has not been trampled under foot, but it has triumphed in the infliction of the threatened penalty against sin; only the penalty has, in amazing grace, fallen upon the person of the sinner's Divine Substitute. The word *penalty* is defined by Worcester as "punishment, whether in property or in person, imposed by law or

[1] Deut. xxi. 18–21. [2] Luke xv. 20. [3] Luke xv. 22.
[4] Luke xv. 22. [5] Gal. iii. 10. [6] Gal. iii. 13.
[7] Gal. iv. 4, 5.

by judicial decision." Webster says it means, "The suffering in person or property which is annexed by law or judicial decision to the commission of a crime, offence, or trespass, as a punishment." When I affirm, then, that the threatened penalty of God's law against sin fell upon Christ, I wish to be understood as asserting that He endured precisely the kind and degree of suffering or punishment which the law demanded on account of sin, as necessary to procure the complete deliverance and entire redemption of all who believe on Him. He endured the penalty in the fullest and truest sense, because penalty is what the law exacts in order to vindicate its insulted majesty and meet its righteous claims, and this is what Christ did when He suffered on the cross.

If a man were put in prison for debt, and a friend should pay the full amount to the creditor, it would be impossible in strict justice to retain the debtor in confinement, because the law would be satisfied—not by anything the prisoner could do, but by what his friend does as his representative and in his place. His farther detention in prison after the discharge of the debt would be grossly illegal and tyrannical. If a monarch should condemn one of his subjects to death for treason, and then permit his own son to suffer instead of the insurgent, it would be impossible in strict justice to execute the threatened sentence upon the person of the traitor. His death under such circumstances would shake the very foundations of the government and destroy all confidence in the integrity of the ruler. A Christian teacher states in a recent peri-

odical that there were two pupils in his school who were warmly attached to each other, and yet totally unlike in disposition and deportment. One was a model scholar, obedient, prompt, and perfect in his lessons and conduct, while the other had attained a bad distinction by his indolence and waywardness. On a certain occasion he was about to inflict punishment upon the unruly boy for some misdemeanor, when the good boy stepped forward and said in substance, "I know he deserves punishment, and your authority must be maintained and the rules of the school enforced, but please punish me in his stead, for it will answer the same purpose as if you punished him, and I cannot bear to see him suffer." The teacher, wishing to illustrate the great central truth of the Bible setting forth Christ as the Substitute for His people, bearing their sins, complied with the request; and then calling back the astonished and weeping scholar whose offence had demanded the infliction of the penalty, and whose heart seemed to be deeply touched by the generous self-sacrifice of his friend, he told him that he must endure the punishment in his own person. At once, it is said, every hand was lifted and every voice in the room was raised in indignant protest, the scholars together exclaiming, "Oh, no! that would not be just to the noble boy who has borne the punishment, and for his sake not a stroke can fall upon the bad boy."

These illustrations come far short of presenting fully the work of Christ in our behalf, because in the cases of the debtor and the traitor and the disobedient pupil there was a mere escape from punishment, with-

out peace of conscience, without refuge from fears of the future, without restoration to their good standing, while, as we have already seen, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." But they serve at least to clear the point we are now considering, that Christ having been "made a curse for us," it is impossible for God, who is "faithful and just," to inflict the penalty of His satisfied law upon those in whose stead it has once been endured by His only-begotten and well-beloved Son. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."[1] If the phrase, to die *for* a righteous man and *for* a good man, means to die in the place, room, and stead of a righteous or good man so as to keep him from dying, then, beyond question, the distinct statement of the Holy Ghost declaring that Christ died *for* the ungodly and *for* us means that He died in the place, room, and stead of the ungodly, and the "us" who are believers. The stupendous difficulty in the way of the sinner's salvation was the claim of God's violated law, demanding by all the perfections of the Divine Being, and by all the necessities of His government, that sin should be punished; but when Jehovah (or Jahveh, the coming One), of whom the prophets sung, "He will magnify the law and make it honorable,"[2] descended from the

[1] Rom. v. 6-8. [2] Isa. xlii. 21.

throne of universal sovereignty, and shrouded His divinity in human flesh, and bowed His head in the shameful death of the cross, the law has no further claim upon believers for whom this death was endured, but, sheathing its flaming sword, it joins with mercy in the sweet invitation, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." [1]

It is most important in the present discussion to keep in mind that the sacrificial death of Christ has already been endured, and His atoning work already accomplished. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." [2] "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." [3] "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." [4] God "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." [5] He "gave himself for our sins." [6] "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." [7] He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." [8] "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom

[1] Isa. lv. 1.
[2] Isa. liii. 5, 6.
[3] Rom. iv. 25.
[4] 1 Cor. xv. 3.
[5] 2 Cor. v. 21.
[6] Gal. i. 4.
[7] Eph. v. 25.
[8] Phil. ii. 8.

he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."[1] "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."[2] "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."[3] "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."[4] "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."[5] "Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh."[6]

You will observe that in these texts not only is the death of Christ directly connected with our sins, and described as vicarious, or endured in our stead, and represented as furnishing the only ground upon which we can be saved, but the past tense is used in every passage, to indicate that the great transaction has already taken place. More than eighteen hundred years ago our redemption was accomplished, and by the power of faith even the Old Testament saints regarded it as achieved in their day, because their impressive types daily proclaimed "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world."[7] The Saviour in His adorable love and pity did not wait for man to seek Him, but came unasked to our lost world and undeserving race. He did not come that God *might* love us, but because God *did* love us, and love us while we were "ungodly," and "sinners," and "enemies," and so love us that He

[1] 1 Thess. i. 9, 10. [2] Heb. ix. 26. [3] Heb. ix. 28.
[4] 1 Pet. ii. 24. [5] 1 Pet. iii. 18. [6] 1 Pet. iv. 1.
[7] 1 Pet. i. 19, 20.

gave His only begotten Son to take our place under His dishonored law, and endure its dreadful penalty in our stead. The Father, as representing the unsullied holiness of the Divine nature, and the inviolable majesty of the Divine law, and the unspeakable interests of the Divine government, met the Son at Calvary bearing upon Him the mighty load of our iniquities; and there, amidst bursting tombs, and rending rocks, and earthquake shocks, and the indescribable sufferings of the cross that extorted the fearful cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"[1] the question of sin and salvation was once and forever settled.

Since that event occurred, and even since it was announced in the first promise made to our fallen parents concerning the seed of the woman, and in the first type of the coats of skins with which God's own hand clothed them, no other atonement has been demanded, no other sacrifice has been possible, no other righteousness has been accepted; but the gracious Redeemer says in His blessed word, "I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry."[2] When the dying Jesus said, "It is finished,"[3] and bowed His head and gave up the ghost, He joyfully announced that all His sacrificial sufferings were past; that all the types of the law were answered; that all its rites were abolished; that all its claims were met; that all its demands were satisfied; that all its purposes were secured; that all its threatenings against His cov-

[1] Matt. xxvii. 46. [2] Isa. xlvi. 13. [3] John xix. 30.

enanted people were silenced; that all its power to injure them was ended; and that nothing more remained to be done but for the whole world, if it will, to rest upon this *finished* work with the calmness of an unfaltering confidence and in the sure anticipation of eternal glory. There is nothing, then, and there can be nothing in the nature of the case, between the sinner and the Saviour—no, not so much as the thickness of the thinnest tissue-paper or the most delicate gold-leaf.

I know how common, alas! it is for the anxious soul to be put upon a course of presumptuous and profitless *doing* in order to be saved; as when urged to enter into covenant with God to serve Him; or to draw up a form of solemn self-surrender and self-dedication; or to be confirmed; or to be baptized; or to join the Church; or to seek religion; or to give the heart unto the Lord as the means of inclining Him to be gracious; or to keep on praying until He will be merciful and answer fervent and frequent supplications. My reader, be persuaded that such advice is not the Gospel, but the law, and you will never, never, obtain an intelligent and assured hope in this way. Under this law-preaching, as I do not hesitate to denounce the instructions too frequently given in the pulpit and in books intended for inquirers, it has come to pass that nearly every one who is awakened to consider the interests of eternity thinks of the blessed God as an unfeeling Governor whose compliance with a request is to be won by the force of importunity; or as a stern judge whose favor is to be

gained by eloquent appeals and tearful entreaties; or as a fickle and foolish father who is at length overcome by the persistent pleadings of a child to give what he is not disposed to grant.

Hence, we seldom find sinners coming at once to Christ after conviction, and, through an immediate and unquestioning faith in the testimony of His word, so promptly receiving a full and finished salvation as to understand the meaning of the Bible when it says, "We which have believed do enter into rest,"[1] and "rejoice evermore."[2] Not only days, but generally weeks or months, and sometimes years, pass away while they are trying to be fit and to be good enough to come; and then, after making a profession of religion, as they very properly call it, their whole subsequent life is apt to pass away in uncertain hopes and vague, unsatisfying conceptions of the entire subject. They imagine that to attain salvation they must climb as it were some steep and laborious ascent or plunge into some profound abyss, not remembering that "the righteousness which is of faith," which is received through faith, which is the result of faith, which is ours by faith, "speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above). Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach."

Oh, if the inquirer who reads these lines only

[1] Heb. iv. 3. [2] 1 Thess. v. 16.

knew how nigh salvation is to him this very moment, surely he would eagerly lay hold of it without the slightest delay. Nay, he does not have to lay hold of it; he has just to receive it in all its completeness. It is nigher to you, my friend, than the door, than any article of furniture in the room where you are sitting, than any object within your reach, for it is as nigh as your mouth and your heart. You are not asked to stir from your seat, to lift your finger, to move an eyelash, to wait a single second, but now, just now, and just as you are, to believe, and to enter straightway into everlasting life. There is no need to plead with God to be merciful, for He is already merciful, and has given the most convincing exhibition of His mercy in the wonderful provisions He has made for your recovery from the dominion and ruinous consequences of sin. There is no need to beseech Him to love you, for He already loves you, and has furnished the most touching manifestation of that love of which the mind of man or of an angel can conceive. "Some years ago two gentlemen were riding together, and as they were about to separate, one addressed the other thus: 'Do you ever read your Bible?' 'Yes; but I get no benefit from it, because, to tell you the truth, I feel I do not love God.' 'No more did I,' replied the other, 'but God loved me.' This answer produced such an effect upon his friend that, to use his own words, it was as if one had lifted him off the saddle into the skies. It opened up to his soul at once the great truth that it is not how much I love God, but how much God loves me."

This is indeed the great truth, "for God so loved the world [the guilty, sinful, ruined world] that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."[1] "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."[2] "We love him, because he first loved us;"[3] and if you attempt to reverse this Divine order so as to love Him first that He may love you in return, you will soon be involved in hopeless confusion and darkness. The devil would like to persuade you that God cannot love you as you are, and hence he is constantly suggesting to parents to tell their little children that God will not love them if they are naughty, but "he is a liar, and the father of it."[4] And when he whispers to your soul that you must do something, or get to be something, different from what you now are before God can love you, he is whispering a lie; for God loves you at this very instant, and sees you afar off, and yearns over you with unutterable tenderness, and longs to take you to His heart of love and make you happy forever.

[1] John iii. 16.
[2] 1 John iv. 9, 10.
[3] 1 John iv. 19.
[4] John viii. 44.

CHAPTER XII

NOTHING BETWEEN THE SINNER AND THE SAVIOUR

WHO, then, puts the slightest barrier between the sinner and the Saviour? Not the Saviour Himself, for His language is, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me:"[1] but you will observe that He does not bid us take His yoke until we first come, laboring and heavy laden with our sins or sorrows, nor does He expect us to learn until He first gives us rest. You will find upon examination that this is the order always laid down in the word of God. Salvation is first bestowed as a free gift, and then service follows; privilege is first granted, and then responsibility ensues; relationship with God as our Father is first established by grace, and then the affections of children are expected; our standing in Christ is first secured through faith in His blood, and then obligation is imposed. There is no telling the amount of evil that has followed man's attempt to reverse this order, and I beg you to remember that as a sinner you have nothing, *nothing*, to do but to come to Christ as you are; by which I mean, you have nothing to do but to believe, upon the sure testimony

[1] Matt. xi. 28, 29.

of God's word, that He is able and willing to save your soul, and to save it without delay. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."[1] In the eagerness of His desire to save, He arose from the sitting posture usual with Jewish teachers, and stood, that His voice might ring like a trumpet above the crowd, crying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me"—come, thirsty and needy, and not because he has done something to quench his thirst and satisfy his need.

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him;
This He gives you—
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."

There is a question just here I wish you to consider, and it is this: Are there many ways by which men are saved, or is there only one way? I know, if you accept the Scriptures as inspired, that you will reply, There is only one way; for it is written, "He that believeth on the Son [no matter who he is] hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son [no matter who he is] shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."[2] "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."[3] This, then, prepares

[1] John vii. 37. [2] John iii. 36. [3] Acts iv. 12.

the way for another question: How was the dying thief saved? There are many who, in answering this question, seem to take it for granted that he was a better thief than the other, who was not saved, but not so does the word of God speak of him. Matthew informs us that "the thieves also [that is, both of them], which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth."[1] Mark says, "They [that is, both of them] that were crucified with him reviled him."[2] The fact is, when he was nailed to the cross he joined his guilty companion and the brutal crowd in heaping insults and reproaches upon the dying Saviour; but God determined to show what His grace can do, and hence flashed into his ruined soul conviction of sin which was the "Spirit's rising beam." Then follows the humble confession of guilt, and the sublime testimony concerning Jesus, that "this man hath done nothing amiss."[3] I call it sublime testimony, because it was delivered in the face of a scoffing world that had united to condemn and crucify the Son of God. The Jews spurned His claims as the Messiah; the Romans scourged Him as a seditious fanatic or impostor; and the confidence of His own disciples received a staggering blow when they saw Him dragged like a common felon through the streets and suspended upon the instrument of shame and torture.

Truly there was little appearance of royalty about that thorn-crowned brow, and that bleeding back mangled by the cruel lash, and those hands and feet pierced with nails; but the poor thief had faith to

[1] Matt. xxvii. 44. [2] Mark xv. 32. [3] Luke xxiii. 41.

say, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."[1] He had no time to get better; he had no time to make himself fit to come to Christ; he had no time to observe rites and ordinances; but he had time to *believe* that the meek Sufferer at his side was what He claimed to be, and to trust in Him for some humble place in the kingdom which he *believed* that Sufferer would in due time establish on the earth, according to the Scriptures. These Scriptures say, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God;"[2] and this is what the dying thief did, and it is all he did, when forth came the sweet assurance from the pallid lips of the Saviour mighty to save in death and through death, "Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise;"[3] and a few hours later the ransomed sinner went his way, the first glad herald from earth to announce to the rejoicing multitude on high that the work of redemption was finished. And now, if it be true that there is only one way of salvation, and therefore that all men are to be saved the same way the thief was saved, what should be done with the preaching that puts the smallest obstacle, though it be nothing more than a straw, between the sinner and the Saviour? Why, toss it overboard as an accursed thing, and make haste to believe, because God has said it, that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."[4]

But let us glance at the testimony of the apostles who received from their Master the great commission, "Go

[1] Luke xxiii. 42.
[2] 1 John v. 1.
[3] Luke xxiii. 43.
[4] 1 John i. 7.

ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;"[1] or, in other words, Preach the good news, the glad tidings of the boundless love of God and the finished work of Christ. We learn that on the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost came down in witness of our Lord's ascension to the right hand of the Father, and wonderful results followed His manifested presence among the disciples. There were at that time in Jerusalem "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians."[2] To this mixed multitude, together with many of the inhabitants of the city, Peter and the rest of the apostles proclaimed Jesus and the resurrection. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . . And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved."[3] There was no delay here; no waiting to get better; no striving to be fit to come; no probing into their hearts to test their feelings, whether they had repented enough, and whether they loved God

[1] Mark xvi. 15. [2] Acts ii. 9–11. [3] Acts ii. 41, 42, 46, 47.

enough, and whether they believed aright, but immediately upon receiving the word as true, *the same day* there were added to the Church about three thousand rejoicing converts.

We look a little farther, and find that "a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in the chariot, read Esaias the prophet."[1] He was an anxious inquirer, as we say in these days, for, having become utterly dissatisfied with heathenism, he had gone to the city of David to bow before the true God, and was still diligently seeking the way of life. Philip, one of the seven deacons elected by the Church to look after the poor, was commanded by the Holy Ghost to join himself to the chariot of the officer. Having promptly obeyed the direction, although it took him from great crowds that attended his ministry in Samaria, to preach to a single sinner, he asked him whether he understood what he was reading. "How can I," was the reply, "except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him." The place he was reading was the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which so clearly and beautifully sets forth the atoning work of Christ for the certain and complete salvation of His people, and "Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." Having shown that the prophet predicted the death of Him who was crucified between

[1] Acts viii. 27, 28.

two thieves, he may have dwelt a little upon the sixth verse of that remarkable chapter which has brought relief to many troubled souls. He may have slowly read the first clause, "All we like sheep have gone astray," and fixing the attention of his interested hearer, pointedly asked, "Do you believe that?" "Oh, yes," would be the reply; "that describes my condition precisely, for like a silly sheep I have wandered from the path of duty and of safety." He may then have read the second clause, "We have turned every one to his own way," and asked, "Do you believe that?" "Indeed I do," would be the answer, "for I have followed the counsels of my own heart and trusted in my own righteousness." He may then have read the last clause, "And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all," and solemnly said, "Do you believe *that?* You believe you have gone astray like a lost sheep; you believe you have turned to your own way; and now do you believe, because God hath said it, that He has laid your iniquities upon Christ the Sin-bearer? If so, they cannot be upon you, and therefore you are a saved man." At all events, however Philip may have talked to him, he replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," and was immediately baptized, and "went on his way rejoicing."[1] *Just so soon* as Jesus was preached he received the testimony concerning Him as true, and hence pursued his journey filled with peace and gladness, because his thoughts were not occupied about himself, but about Christ and His finished work.

[1] Acts viii. 39.

Once more, we are told that Paul and Silas were preaching in the city of Philippi, where a great uproar occurred as the result of a miracle wrought on "a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination." The preachers were seized, dragged before the magistrates, savagely beaten, and committed to prison, with a command to the jailer to keep them safely; "who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks." But the hand of violence could not touch the resurrection life they had received from the Saviour, nor could the stroke of suffering mar its happiness; and therefore at midnight they "prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them." He who had sent them to Europe determined to plant the banner of the cross on this new continent, whether men would hear or forbear, "and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed." The jailer, awakened by the tumult, naturally inferred that the prisoners had fled, and, knowing that he would be held accountable for their escape, was on the point of committing suicide, when Paul arrested his uplifted hand by calling with a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm; for we are all here." Then conviction seems to have fastened on the man's conscience, and he was persuaded by the extraordinary events he had witnessed that the poor girl had unconsciously uttered the truth when she followed Paul and his companions for many days through the streets,

crying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." Accordingly, "he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" This is a very earnest, but very plain and simple, question, and the answer is equally plain and simple. *Do?* Why do you ask about doing? You must *do* nothing but "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." As he was an ignorant heathen who probably had never heard before of Jesus Christ, of course he needed instruction; "and they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."[1]

In considering these examples of instantaneous conversion it is useless to reply that the times have changed since Christ and the apostles preached. It is true the times have changed, but the word of God has not changed, and man's need has not changed, and human nature has not changed, and the way of salvation has not changed. It is true that most of the conversions in our day occur only at the close of a protracted period of darkness, and effort, and prayer, and reading, and reflection, and repentance; but this only goes to show how far we have departed from the sim-

[1] Acts xvi. 32-34.

plicity and blessedness of the Gospel as at first proclaimed, when the disciples went abroad telling the good news of Christ's death on the cross for sinners, and as many as believed the glad tidings to be true, and true for themselves, straightway entered into life. If a friend of undoubted veracity were to enter your house or meet you on the street and tell you good news that greatly concerned your welfare, how long a time must elapse before you would believe him? A day, a week, a month, a year? Would you say to him, "I wish I could believe you; I am trying to believe you; I must wait until I *feel* that I believe you; I cannot *realize* that what you tell me is true;" or would you just believe him and rejoice? "Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;"[1] and the way to harden the heart, as we learn from the chapter in which this text is found, is to continue in unbelief. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation,"[2] and the *now* refers not only to the gospel age as distinguished from the dispensation of the law, but to this passing moment.

The way some men set forth what they call the Gospel would require their hearers to spend about four years in college and three years in a theological seminary in order to be saved, and even then they could not be certain of their salvation. But God the Father says, "Now!" and God the Son says, "Now!" and God the Spirit says, "Now!" and the Bible says, "Now!" and the very depths of the sinner's guilty

[1] Heb. iii. 7, 8. [2] 2 Cor. vi. 2.

and ruined nature echo the cry, "Now." If he stays away from Christ trying to do something until he is as old as Methuselah, could such a thing be, at the close of nine hundred and sixty-nine years he will not be a step nor a hair's breadth nearer salvation than he was the moment of conviction; and on the other hand, the moment he is in Christ by believing on Him he is as certainly and completely saved as he will be a thousand years afterward. If the dying thief, after receiving from the dying Saviour the assurance of salvation, had been permitted to descend to the earth and to remain among men preaching and praying for a hundred years, at the end of this time he would not have been more certainly and completely saved than he was when hanging on the cross, nor would he have had any other ground of comfort than he had then, even the sure word of the Son of God. The certainty of salvation, therefore, cannot be increased by delay, but while the sinner is delaying, suppose he should die; what then? He has not the slightest assurance that he will live an hour longer, and hence God does not deal with him on the ground that he has years to study and struggle before he is saved, but says, in all the urgency of His love, "*Now*, NOW, NOW!"

Inquirers meet with obstacles in trying to find peace simply because they persist in thinking of themselves instead of directing their thoughts to Christ, and to the object of His mission to earth, and to His finished work. They complain that they are not good enough to come. No, and they never will be in

themselves: but they forget that Jesus has said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." [1] "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." [2] "This is a faithful saying," says Paul, "and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." [3] Who was Paul, and what was he doing when Christ Jesus saved him? He himself tells us he was "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," [4] and "I verily thought with myself," he writes, "that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." [5] Truly, Paul did nothing to make himself fit or good enough to come, but he was "a brand plucked out of the fire," [6] just as every other sinner is; for all of us are far worse than we think ourselves to be even when most deeply humbled under a sense of our guilt.

The fact is that *out of* Christ we have no worth or worthiness at all, do what we may; but *in* Christ the vilest of the vile are infinitely worthy, for they are clothed with the righteousness of God. A wicked, swearing teamster, who had been the terror of the

[1] Matt. ix. 13. [2] Luke xix. 10. [3] 1 Tim. i. 15.
[4] 1 Tim. i. 13. [5] Acts xxvi. 9–11. [6] Zech. iii. 2.

neighborhood, was led by the Spirit to believe in Jesus, and it was announced that he would openly confess the Saviour before men and partake of the Lord's Supper. Driving through a town where he was well known, he was met by an old woman with the question, "They tell me, Thomas, that you be going to take the Sacrament on Sunday; is it true that you be?" "By the grace of Christ my Saviour," he replied, "I expect to have the privilege of showing His death with others who believe in Him, if that is what you call taking the Sacrament." "But, Thomas, do you think that you be worthy?" said the old woman. "I don't mean to reflect on ye, but you know what kind of man you have been, and what kind of life you have led, and do you think, Thomas, that you be worthy?" "As worthy as any man in Coalford," was the reply, "for I am a poor worthless sinner saved by the grace of God through the precious blood of Christ. I trust in Him alone." Such is ever the language of faith leading the sinner to lose sight of self in the believing, adoring contemplation of Christ, who so graciously and sweetly says, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."[1]

"But I am a great sinner, sayest thou?
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
But I am an old sinner, sayest thou?
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
But I am a hard-hearted sinner, sayest thou?
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.

[1] John vi. 37.

I have served Satan all my days, sayest thou?
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
But I have sinned against light, sayest thou?
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
But I have sinned against mercy, sayest thou?
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
I have no good thing to bring, sayest thou?
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ."

"But," says the sinner, "must I not be born again before I can rejoice in hope of the glory of God?" I reply, You *are* born again the moment you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, as has been previously shown. Faith is the first throb of life, so to speak, in the new-created man, the first cry of the new-born child. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."[1] "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."[2] "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."[3] "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."[4] "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth."[5] These passages are sufficient to show that the Holy Ghost uses the word of God, or the word of truth, or the Gospel, to set forth Christ in His Divine person and atoning work; and when we believe on Him as there revealed, we are born again. We are not called upon to be worrying ourselves about regeneration, nor to be looking for its fruits, but to believe in Christ, knowing then, accord-

[1] Gal. iii. 26. [2] John i. 12. [3] 1 John v. 1.
[4] 1 Pet. i. 23. [5] James i. 18.

ing to His own teaching, that we are assuredly born of water (the scriptural symbol of the word) and of the Spirit. Regeneration, therefore, does not stand between the sinner and the Saviour; for the new life is imparted, the new nature is implanted, the new man is formed, by the power of the Spirit through faith in Jesus made known in the Gospel.

"But," says another, "must I not repent before coming to Christ?" If you mean as a condition upon which God will be merciful, or as the means of winning His favor, or as a preliminary work to fit you to approach Him, I reply, most emphatically, No, you must not. There are thousands who try to make a Saviour out of their repentance, but this is contrary to the Scriptures. True repentance, as described in the Bible, always implies faith in Christ, and the two cannot be separated. No man really repents unless he believes in Jesus, and, on the other hand, no man really believes in Jesus unless he repents, for repentance is the tear which the believing sinner drops when by faith he sees the Son of God extended on the cross. The word in the Greek, however, which is translated "repentance" in our English Bible, does not necessarily imply emotion of any kind, but simply means an "after-thought" or "after-mind," and hence "a change of mind;" but whether this change of mind is accompanied with joy or sorrow depends wholly upon the cause or occasion which gives rise to it. About what, then, is the sinner called to change his mind? Obviously, about God and His character, for he has had wrong thoughts of the Almighty all his life; and hence

it is written, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts."[1] But surely he can never change his mind about his Creator until he sees "God in Christ" hating sin and yet putting sin away, judging evil and yet forgiving the evil-doer. Unless, then, by faith you behold the atoning sacrifice on the cross, it is impossible to repent, for it is said, "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance."[2] It is not thy badness, but God's *goodness*, that leadeth thee to repentance, and until you believe in that goodness as manifested in the gift of His well-beloved Son, you might as soon expect to obtain light by looking at darkness, or to receive life by looking at a corpse, as to repent by working at your poor, dead soul. Repentance, therefore, does not stand between the sinner and the Saviour, but it always accompanies and flows from faith in Christ; for, as you at once observe, if you must be occupied with repentance before believing, it is incumbent on those who tell you to repent as a preliminary step that must be taken in order to reach salvation also to inform you how much you must repent, and for what length of time.

"But," says another, "must I not be baptized before I can rest in the assurance that I am saved?" Again I reply, No; not that I would undervalue baptism in its true place, but that I would keep it in its true place, where the Word of God puts it, and from which it has been wrested by the rude hand of legalism to "drown men in destruction and perdition." There is not an instance of Christian baptism in the New Testament un-

[1] Isa. lv. 7. [2] Rom. ii. 4.

less it was preceded by faith in Christ on the part of the person baptized. I am not referring to infant baptism, for it does not fall in with my purpose to discuss that question ; but, among adults, only believers in Jesus were baptized, and the common practice in these days of seeking to make Christians by the use of water in sprinkling, pouring, or immersion is utterly subversive of the work of Christ and ruinous to the souls of countless thousands. It is a fact in striking contrast with the estimate placed upon baptism now that the Saviour in all His wonderful discourses never preached about it, and we know that "Jesus himself baptized not."[1] Not only so, but we find the Apostle Paul saying, "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius ; . . . and I baptized also the house of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel."[2] When we add to all this that the dying thief was saved although he was not baptized, and that in thirteen of the inspired Epistles baptism is not once mentioned, and very seldom in the others, it is apparent that man in his proud and obdurate self-righteousness has sought to make a simple and significant ordinance an enemy of the cross of Christ. No, sinner ! baptism does not stand between you and the Saviour, but after believing you will joyfully receive it, as Abraham received "the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised."[3]

Nothing, indeed, nothing but your unbelief, stands

[1] John iv. 2. [2] 1 Cor. i. 14, 16, 17. [3] Rom. iv. 11.

between you and an instant, complete salvation. You do not need to go up to heaven for it, for that would imply that Christ had not come down "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;"[1] nor are you required to descend into the lower parts of the earth, for that would imply that Christ was not delivered for our offences and "raised again for justification;"[2] but the word is nigh thee, and so nigh that, without waiting an hour or a minute, without thinking of the past or the future, without stopping to look into the exercises of your mind, without tarrying to understand this doctrine or that doctrine, without pausing at regeneration, or repentance, or baptism, or anything else, you may immediately enter into life, eternal life, if you truly believe that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."[3] What a glorious salvation, and what a precious Saviour! It is not by what we do, but by what He has done, we are saved, and hence in answer to your question, "What must I do?" let the sweet hymn answer:

"Nothing, either great or small,
Nothing, sinner, no!
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago.

"When He from His lofty throne
Stoop'd to do and die,
Everything was fully done—
Hearken to His cry—

[1] Heb. ix. 26. [2] Rom. iv. 25. [3] 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

"'IT IS FINISHED:' yes, indeed—
Finish'd every jot.
Sinner, this is all you need;
Tell me, is it not?

"Weary, working, plodding one,
Wherefore toil you so?
Cease your doing; all was done
Long, long ago.

"Till to JESUS' work you cling
By a simple faith,
'Doing' is a deadly thing—
'Doing' ends in death.

"Cast your deadly 'doing' down—
Down at Jesus' feet;
Stand IN HIM, in Him alone,
Gloriously 'COMPLETE.'"

CHAPTER XIII

BELIEF AND CONFESSION

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."—*Romans* x. 9, 10.

IT is said that soon after the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, a French lady who had been in her service attempted to assassinate Elizabeth, Queen of England. Having been arrested while hanging about the court, she boldly announced her name and design, expressing regret that she had failed to accomplish her purpose. She was brought into the presence of Elizabeth, who said to her, "What, think you, is my duty upon the hearing of such a case?" "Do you put the question to me as a queen or a judge?" asked the prisoner. "As a queen," was the reply. "Then you should grant me a pardon," she answered. "But," inquired the queen, "what assurance can you give me that you will not abuse my mercy and attempt my life again? Should I pardon, it should be based upon conditions to be safe from your murderous revenge in future." "Grace fettered by precautions—grace that hath conditions—is no grace," exclaimed the woman; and history states that the remark so charmed Elizabeth that she immediately ordered her release, and

bound her to her royal person ever afterward by the ties of fervent gratitude and devoted affection.

Whether this incident occurred precisely as here related may be called in question, but it admits of no doubt that "grace fettered by precautions—grace that hath conditions—is no grace." I am unwilling, therefore, to say that belief and confession are the conditions of salvation, because the word *condition* in popular use implies generally something done by one person or party on account of which another person or party does something promised or stipulated. Now, God has not promised or stipulated to give eternal life to the sinner *on account of* his belief and confession, but solely on account of the finished work of Christ. Belief and confession are requisites, or they are absolutely necessary, with those old enough to be responsible, in order to enjoy eternal life, but they are not conditions, for "grace fettered by precautions—grace that hath conditions—is no grace." I wish to make the impression upon your mind that the grace of God in saving lost men is entirely unfettered—that it hath no conditions; but if belief and confession are presented as conditions upon which forgiveness is extended, the inquiring soul is sure to be turned back to the law, or works, or the principle of *doing*, to obtain peace. Very often have I known anxious sinners to keep themselves in darkness and distress because they feared their faith was not of the right kind, and not strong enough, as they express it, or because they were solicitous to confess Christ in a proper form.

Thus do they unconsciously strive to find a Saviour,

not in Christ, but in their belief and confession; and owing to the deep-seated legalism of the human heart, they pervert the very purpose of God in ordaining salvation by faith. "Therefore, it is of faith," He says, "that it might be by grace;" [1] and again: "By grace are ye saved through faith [not on account of faith, but *through* faith]; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." [2] But if a man is saved on account of his belief and confession, they obviously become works as truly as his attempted obedience of the law, and they will be regarded as works to be done when set forth as conditions upon which God grants salvation. Hence the desire, on the part of those who have been taught to look upon them as conditions, to discover some evidence of the genuineness and strength of their faith in their good feelings and happy frame of mind, and hence the mad search of thousands for a true Church to furnish a refuge from the frown of incensed justice. Satan, with his practiced cunning, succeeds in turning away their attention from Christ to themselves; and thus, if he cannot destroy he keeps them uncertain in their hopes, feeble in their spiritual growth, and "all their lifetime subject to bondage," [3] instead of going forth the emancipated and rejoicing children of light, and of liberty, and of God.

I cannot consent, then, to speak of belief and confession as conditions of salvation, but rather as the means or channel through which salvation, devised in grace, accomplished in grace, and bestowed in grace,

[1] Rom. iv. 16. [2] Eph. ii. 8, 9. [3] Heb. ii. 15.

is received by the sinner, who is dependent on the Holy Spirit for every proper exercise of his mind, for every right emotion of his heart, and for every acceptable word of his mouth, from the first to the last stage of his religious experience. His ability both to believe and to confess Christ sincerely and truly is due, as we are plainly taught in the Scriptures, to the sovereign grace of God, and this ability is a Divine gift, not a human work, "lest any man should boast." It is the height of folly, therefore, for my reader to be occupied about his faith in place of fixing his thoughts upon Christ; for, faith being a gift, he ought to know at once that it is imparted in a manner worthy of the glorious Giver, since "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."[1] "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"[2] and because *He* gives us faith we should be perfectly satisfied that it is amply sufficient to secure the end for which it is conferred. He intends to have the whole glory of our salvation, to the praise of His dear Son, through the wonder-working power of His Spirit; and consequently the way of life revealed in His Gospel is precisely suited to attain His object and precisely suited to our need as guilty, helpless sinners. Blessed be His name! He proclaims with heavenly sweetness and simplicity "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that

[1] James i. 17. [2] Rom. viii. 32.

God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

It is possible that some one may be perplexed by the fact that in the first of these two verses confession is mentioned before belief, and hence it is important to observe that in the second verse belief is placed before confession; and evidently, if confession is anything more than the grossest hypocrisy or the merest mockery, it is only the result or expression of the belief already exercised. It must be apparent upon a moment's reflection that we cannot honestly and intelligently confess Jesus to be our Lord until we first believe in the heart that God has raised Him from the dead. Confession, therefore, is mentioned before belief in the former verse, just to mark the character of genuine faith, and this having been done, the mode of statement is changed in the latter verse, and the natural order is given. Both are necessary, but they are necessary for a very different reason. Belief is necessary before we are saved, and confession is necessary after we are saved. Confession sustains to belief the same kind of relation which works do to faith, and as the apostle argues, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith [that is, such faith, his *saying* he hath faith] save him?"[1] So what does it profit, my brethren, though a man *say* he believes in his heart that God hath raised Christ from the dead, and yet

[1] James ii. 14.

refuses to confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus? Can his *saying* he believes this save him while he gives no outward manifestation of the reality of his belief?

Confession, then, forms no part of the meritorious cause or reason of our salvation, but it is equally true that real belief will be sure to result or express itself in confession. Lazarus was not made alive because he came forth from the grave and appeared among men, but he came forth and appeared because he was made alive. Neither do we confess Christ with the mouth that we may have life, but because through faith we already have life. Nay, I will go farther and assert that where the belief is intelligent and sincere it will manifest itself in confession as surely as the healthful life of a child will manifest itself in constant activity and joyous gambols. If a true believer were cast on an uninhabited island, I think his songs of praise would echo along the lonely shore and the voice of his thanksgiving would daily break the silence of nature. If he were dumb, the soul-stirring belief that he "is passed from death unto life" and become a "joint heir with Christ" would sparkle in his eye, and give shape to his gestures, and regulate his gait, and lead him by the powerful instincts of the "new man" to seek the society and fellowship of those who like himself are "born again." Tell me, if you will, of one who, having been rescued from flame or flood by the heroic efforts of a friend, ever after persistently refuses to recognize his deliverer, or to take his proffered hand in an assembly, but do not tell me that a sinner, saved from the fires of hell

and from the boundless sea of God's indignation and wrath through the death of Jesus, can deliberately decline to confess his Lord or to acknowledge his indebtedness for redeeming grace.

"Brightness of the Father's glory,
Shall Thy praise unuttered lie?
Fly, my tongue, such guilty silence;
Sing the Lord who came to die.
Did the angels sing Thy coming?
Did the shepherds learn their lays?
Shame would cover me ungrateful,
Should my tongue refuse to praise."

The time has been when those who confessed Christ "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy); they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."[1] When this time again comes, and the faithful witnesses for the truth shall be slain, it will be no less the duty—no, I will not say duty, but it will be no less the exalted privilege—of the saints then on the earth to confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, because they believe in the heart that God hath raised Him from the dead. Animated by the sublime hopes of the Gospel, and rendered fearless by the fervor of a personal affection for Christ, every true believer will be ready to exclaim, "Come and

[1] Heb. xi. 36-38.

hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."[1] So it is now; for wherever a sincere, heartfelt belief exists, it always causes the knee to bow at the name of Jesus and the tongue to "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."[2] Levity may laugh and scepticism sneer, false friends may entreat and foes assail, but the soul linked to God in holy communion by faith in the Son of His love will be lifted above the reach of this poor world's temptations and threats, and look down upon it in tender pity and with undisturbed composure. It is enough for such a soul to hear the Master say, "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."[3] It is enough to read the solemn declaration of the Holy Ghost recorded by the pen of the inspired apostle: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."[4] "Ye are my friends," says the Saviour, "if ye do whatsoever I command you;"[5] and knowing that He has commanded us to confess Him before men, to be baptized in His name, and to eat the bread and drink the cup at the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Him to show His death till He come, the believer cannot hesitate to wear the badge of discipleship—not, as I said before, that he may be saved, but because he *is* saved.

[1] Ps. lxvi. 16. [2] Phil. ii. 11. [3] Matt. x. 32, 33.
[4] 1 John iv. 15. [5] John xv. 14.

But you will notice that confession is a personal thing: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus." It is not enough that you confess Jesus to be Lord, or the Lord of others, but *thy* Lord, thus acknowledging your individual obligation to Him, and His Divine sovereignty and rightful authority over *you* as redeemed by His blood and the object of His love. Confession, then, is the necessary result and external evidence of your personal faith in Christ, who came down from heaven to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and is now exalted "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."[1] Hence it is written, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;"[2] for no man can say this intelligently, and as the expression of his firm conviction, until he believes in Jesus as his Divine and almighty Saviour; and no man can believe that the meek and lowly "carpenter, the Son of Mary," was God manifest in the flesh, until he is enlightened by the Holy Ghost. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every Spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every Spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God."[3]

What is it, then, to "confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus"? Let us suppose that you should say to some friend entering your room while reading this chapter, or to any number of persons assembled on any occasion, "I sincerely confess that Jesus of

[1] Eph. i. 21. [2] 1 Cor. xii. 3. [3] 1 John iv. 2, 3.

Nazareth who was crucified between two thieves was not what the world took Him to be,—an impious impostor or weak fanatic,—but that He was the Son of God and the Saviour of men; and I joyfully acknowledge Him to be my Lord, entitled to my faith, and worship, and obedience." This would surely be confessing Him with the mouth, and this is so simple a child can understand it. If a true Christian were in your presence, or in the presence of "governors and kings," or in the presence of the whole human race, and a fitting opportunity should occur, he would gladly speak of Jesus as Thomas did when he said to the risen Saviour, "My Lord and my God,"[1] and he would carefully avoid the fearful sin of Joseph of Arimathea, who was "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews,"[2] and who, in consequence of his unmanly fear, did nothing worthy of a disciple until compelled, after the Saviour's death, to confess Him in an imperfect manner by begging of Pilate the privilege of burying the mangled body. There can be no difficulty, then, in understanding what is meant by confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus, since it implies a readiness on your part on all suitable occasions to own Him in His true character and relation to yourself as your Lord and Saviour.

Neither can there be any trouble in understanding what is meant by believing in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, unless the expression, to believe *in thine heart*, may cause some perplexity. About this it is only necessary to state that the Holy

[1] John xx. 28. [2] John xix. 38.

Ghost in the Bible takes very little notice of the distinctions made by modern science between the different faculties and departments of the soul. We are in the habit of referring the understanding to the mind and the affections to the heart as their appropriate seat; but the word of God very often includes the whole inner man, embracing the understanding, the will, and the affections, under the term *heart*. But even if we observe our human definitions and distinctions, it is still true that we must believe *in the heart* that God raised Christ from the dead in order to be saved. It is no idle speculation with which we are now engaged; it is no cold system of philosophy commanding the homage of the intellect by its logical force and beauty; but there is a Divine person inviting our confidence and a divinely-attested fact requiring our faith.

It is an easy thing to crush the cavils of such sceptics as Strauss and Renan, and to bring forward an array of arguments to prove the resurrection of our Lord that will force the assent of the mind; and yet, if the heart remains unaffected, not a step will be taken to secure the salvation of the soul. There are multitudes, doubtless, among the worldly and ungodly, who profess to believe that Christ rose from the dead, or at least they can claim that they do not dispute it. But there is a vast difference between not disputing a truth and believing a truth. They may not dispute it because they never had sufficient interest to investigate the question; or they may make a careless, unthinking avowal of their faith in this important teach-

ing of God's word, not upon His testimony, but because it seems to be generally accepted by the better class of persons among whom they live; or they may be convinced it is true without the slightest personal concern in its momentous consequences. Absorbed in the business and the pleasures of the world, they receive it as they receive any other well-established historical statement, and it produces no more marked effect upon them. It is to guard us against the fatal mistake of supposing that such a faith as this can be of any real value we find it written "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Let a few simple illustrations exhibit the difference between believing with the mind and believing with the heart; or rather let them show what is meant by believing both with the mind and heart. All belief in the first instance is necessarily an act of the mind, but there are some things we believe with the mind alone, and there are other things we believe with the heart also. We may believe that Alexander invaded Asia; that Hannibal crossed the Alps; that Julius Cæsar was assassinated in Rome; that John Milton wrote Paradise Lost; that the sun is ninety-five millions of miles distant from the earth; that light travels with the velocity of more than one hundred and ninety thousand miles in a second; but we do not believe these facts with the heart. If a friend should inform you that he had received a letter from England announcing the dispositon by will of an immense estate

without giving the name of the heir, you would probably believe him, but you would believe him with the mind only, because the news could be of no personal interest to you. But if he should proceed with his information and declare that you yourself are the heir to whom this estate immediately descends, you would then believe with the heart, provided wealth seems to you, as it does to many, a most desirable object. You might doubt whether such good news could be true; but if there was no room to question the credibility of the statement, you would believe it with more than your mind, because your heart would be at once summoned to rejoice. A criminal under sentence of death might believe the testimony of his jailer that a certain man had been elected governor during the period of his imprisonment, but he would believe it only with the mind. If, however, the jailer should go on to tell him that this newly-elected governor had extended to him an unconditional pardon, and that he was at liberty to leave his dungeon, he would believe the second statement both with the mind and the heart. When absent from your home a correspondent might relate many ordinary occurrences that had transpired after your departure, and you would doubtless believe the statements, but only with the mind. If, however, a letter or telegraphic despatch should at length be received announcing the sudden death of your child, or the one who was dearest to you on earth, you would know what is meant by believing with the heart as well as with the mind.

CHAPTER XIV

BELIEF AND CONFESSION

NOW, when you say that you believe God raised Christ from the dead, the question is not whether you believe it as you believe that Oliver Cromwell was once Lord Protector of England or that George Washington was the first President of the United States, but are you glad that God raised Him from the dead? Do you see in His resurrection the crowning proof and overwhelming demonstration of the fact that He is indeed the Saviour of lost men, and your Saviour? Do you see in it in connection with His death the only way of escape from the dreadful curse of the violated law of God, and the only ground on which you can build your hope of immortal glory? Do you see in it the satisfactory evidence that your sins were left behind in the grave where they consigned Him, and the certain pledge of your own joyful resurrection when He shall come a second time apart from sin unto salvation? It is written, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification,"[1] and it is vain to speak of believing such a truth as this unless it finds a lodgment in your heart and becomes the mainspring of your actions. It is too important and bears too

[1] Rom. iv. 25.

directly upon your personal salvation to be dismissed from your mind with the hasty admission that you do not call it in question. If you were dangerously ill, and really believed there was but one remedy that could stay the ravages of your malady, you would not be content with an indifferent announcement of your faith in its restorative power, but you would gladly and thankfully receive it. If you were on trial for your life, you would not listen with quiet unconcern to the verdict of the jury that swept the dreadful gallows from your view, but your heart would give a great throb of joy on hearing words which could give you back freedom, and home, and friends. The belief of religious truth, also, is sure to be attended by the exercise of the affections; and hence Christian faith is the heartfelt reception of what God says in His word concerning the person, the death, and the resurrection of Christ.

This will plainly appear as we proceed to inquire out of the Sacred Scriptures precisely what is to be believed in order to be saved. I beg your careful, undivided attention to what follows, because *belief* is the turning-point in the destiny of your soul. I shall quote passages with which you are probably familiar, but nevertheless I ask you to read them, and to read them again and again, until their full meaning is received "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."[1] It will give you some idea of the importance of the truth we are now to consider when you are informed that the words *believe* and *faith* occur

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 4.

about *five hundred times* in the New Testament. Our Lord's first recorded conversation with an inquiring sinner was about the necessity of belief; all His discourses and miracles were directed to the point of inducing men to believe in Him; and after His resurrection, we hear Him saying to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not [whether he is or is not baptized] shall be damned."[1] Accordingly, the apostles went forth, and everywhere, and among all classes of men, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, moral and immoral, in answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" their reply was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."[2]

But to illustrate the frequency and prominence with which belief in Christ is taught, let us glance at the testimony of a single Gospel on this subject. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe."[3] "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."[4] "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."[5] "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the

[1] Mark xvi. 15, 16. [2] Acts xvi. 31. [3] John i. 6, 7.
[4] John i. 12. [5] John ii. 11.

miracles which he did."[1] "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. . . . He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."[2] "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."[3] "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. . . . And many more believed because of his own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."[4] "And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, . . . and himself believed, and his whole house."[5] "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."[6] "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me."[7] "This is the work of God, that ye believe on

[1] John ii. 23. [2] John iii. 14, 16, 18. [3] John iii. 36.
[4] John iv. 39, 41, 42. [5] John iv. 50, 53. [6] John v. 24.
[7] John v. 46.

him whom he hath sent."[1] "He that believeth on me shall never thirst."[2] "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."[3] "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive."[4]

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed."[5] "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him."[6] "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him."[7] "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."[8] "Because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."[9] "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and

[1] John vi. 29. [2] John vi. 35. [3] John vi. 40.
[4] John vii. 38, 39. [5] John viii. 31. [6] John ix. 35–38.
[7] John x. 37, 38. [8] John xi. 25–27. [9] John xi. 42.

had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him."[1] "While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."[2] "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."[3] "Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he."[4] "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."[5] "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake."[6] "And when he [the Comforter] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me."[7] "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."[8] "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."[9] "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe."[10] "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."[11]

[1] John xi. 45. [2] John xii. 36. [3] John xii. 46.
[4] John xiii. 19. [5] John xiv. 1. [6] John xiv. 11.
[7] John xvi. 8, 9. [8] John xvi. 27. [9] John xvii. 20, 21.
[10] John xix. 35. [11] John xx. 30, 31.

These are not all the passages concerning belief in Christ that might be quoted from the Gospel written by John, but enough has been said to indicate how large a place the doctrine occupies in the word of God. They still further show that the truth to be believed in order to salvation is the great truth expressed by Martha when she said, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world;" or, as Simon Peter expressed it on a certain occasion, "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."[1] If you will look with a little more care at some of the texts already given, and at a few others, you will soon be convinced that the heartfelt belief of the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is salvation to the person so believing. At the beginning of the Gospel by John we read, "He came unto his own, and his own [that is, the Jews] received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."[2] When He manifested Himself to the people of Israel, they were offended by His lowly appearance. They had expected their Messiah to be clothed at His first coming with Divine majesty, and to march in royal state for their national deliverance; and when Jesus of Nazareth, the reputed son of Joseph and the real son of a humble virgin, presented His claims to their faith and allegiance, they received Him not. "But

[1] John vi. 69. [2] John i. 11–13.

as many as received him "—received Him in His true character—to them gave He power to become the sons of God, for they were born of God by believing on His name, or by believing that, notwithstanding His unpretending exterior, He was indeed Immanuel, Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

When He said to Nathanael that He had seen him under a fig tree before Philip called him, "Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou?" Believest thou what? Why, manifestly, that Jesus was the Son of God, the King of Israel; and so believing, the man was saved; for the Lord said unto him, "Thou shalt see greater things than these." [1]

When He spoke so kindly to the fallen woman at the well of Samaria, seeking in matchless grace and wisdom to draw her to Himself, she said at length, perhaps with a dim consciousness of the truth stealing like the gray dawn into her opening mind, "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he," [2] and obviously it was the belief of this statement which saved her soul. No further conversation ensued between them; but instantly receiving as true His own word that He was the Messias, or Christ, she left her waterpot, and in

[1] John i. 49, 50. [2] John iv. 25, 26.

the joy of her heart announced to every one she met that she had found the Saviour.

Another instance of salvation through belief of the same truth occurs in the account of the man who was born blind, to whom our Lord gave sight. Although the person of Christ was unknown to him, yet he boldly defended His character against the sneers of the Pharisees, and accordingly was cast out of the synagogue, or excommunicated. "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him."[1] It is perfectly obvious that the truth here believed in order to salvation was nothing more than this, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, and therefore the proper object of worship.

In like manner, we hear the confession of the eunuch who said to Philip, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."[2] The cordial belief of this truth was the way, simple as it is, by which the troubled sinner immediately entered into rest, and joy, and life everlasting. The same noble confession was heard from Peter when our Lord "asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said,

[1] John ix. 35–38. [2] Acts viii. 37, 38.

Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."[1] How certain it is from this that if any man sincerely believes Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, the truth is revealed to him by the Father, and is the channel or means through which the blessing of salvation is bestowed! Hence, the Saviour says, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life;"[2] and "if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."[3] "These are written," says John, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."[4] Believing what? Evidently, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and so believing, the assurance is we have life through His name. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."[5] "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"[6] Nothing more need be said to prove that every one who truly and in the heart believes Jesus to be the Son of God is saved.

But you at once perceive that no one can really believe this without also believing that He died in the manner and for the object set forth in the Sacred

[1] Matt. xvi. 13–17. [2] John vi. 47. [3] John viii. 24.
[4] John xx. 31. [5] 1 John v. 1. [6] 1 John v. 5.

Scriptures. It would be absurd and self-contradictory to believe upon the testimony of these Scriptures that He is the Son of God, and at the same time to deny in the face of the same testimony that He died upon the cross, and died as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." [1] "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." [2] "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." [3] "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." [4] "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." [5] "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." [6] "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." [7] "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." [8] "Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." [9] "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." [10] "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." [11] "He is the propitiation for our sins." [12] "Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins." [13] "Unto him that loved us, and

[1] John i. 29.
[2] Matt. xx. 28.
[3] Matt. xxvi. 28.
[4] Rom. viii. 3.
[5] 2 Cor. v. 21.
[6] Gal. i. 4.
[7] 1 Cor. xv. 3.
[8] Heb. i. 3.
[9] Heb. ix. 26.
[10] 1 Pet. ii. 24.
[11] 1 John i. 7.
[12] 1 John ii. 2.
[13] 1 John iii. 5.

washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." [1]

The Bible is full of such texts, for its great design from the third chapter of Genesis onward to the close is to proclaim our deliverance from sin and its dreadful consequences through the death of God's only begotten and well-beloved Son. It is impossible, therefore, to believe in the heart that He is the Son of God without also believing that He died, not by accident, not by the uncontrolled vindictiveness of His enemies, not as an example, for then His example were thrown away, since none of us are called to die upon the cross under the hidings of God's face, but that He died as the *sin-bearer* and divinely-appointed substitute of His people, who was made to be sin for them in that fearful hour when from His breaking heart and pallid lips ascended the mournful cry of desertion. The question, then, is just this: Do you sincerely believe that He died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself? If you do, you are a saved person, and saved now; and if you were to ask me how I know, I would reply, I know it upon precisely the same testimony that tells me Jesus is the Son of God. He who declares by the Holy Ghost in His blessed word that when the fulness of the time was come He "sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law" by being made a curse for them, still further

[1] Rev. i. 5, 6.

declares that the belief of this truth is salvation; and we have as much authority for believing one statement as the other.

And now what renders assurance doubly sure is the fact that Jesus, who lived and was crucified, rose again, and was thus "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."[1] If God Himself had not connected the forgiveness of your sins and eternal life with your belief of what He says in the Bible concerning the person, the death, and the resurrection of His Son, you could not be blamed for remaining in anxiety and fear as to your salvation. But after He has so distinctly stated that if you believe in your heart that He raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, you shall be—not may be, nor hope to be, no, *shall be —saved*, a moment's doubt of your pardon and acceptance is a grievous dishonor to Him who is too holy to tell a lie, too good to trifle with your eternal interests. When the multitude listened to Peter and the other apostles preaching on the day of Pentecost, they heard of the person, the death, and the resurrection of Christ, but they did not at once hear that the belief of the testimony which had been delivered in their presence was the simple and yet sure way of receiving life. Hence for a little while they were greatly perplexed and troubled, being convicted of sin, but seeing no way of escape from ruin, until they were told of the remission of sins in immediate connection with the name of Jesus, who had been

[1] Rom. i. 4.

preached to them; and believing that He had put away sin, they that gladly received the word were baptized, and rejoiced.

Saul of Tarsus, also, on his way to Damascus, had overwhelming proof of the resurrection of Christ, and yet he continued in darkness and distress until informed that the Lord had risen, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved, and believing this, "immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales," and "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God."[1] In the chapter that follows the narrative of Paul's conversion we find Peter preaching for the first time to the Gentiles, in the house of the Roman centurion, Cornelius. He first set forth the person of Jesus Christ, declaring that "he is Lord of all," and then His death upon the cross, and then His resurrection, adding: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."[2] Believeth what? Clearly what the apostle had just affirmed concerning Him as the Lord of all who came down from heaven to die and to rise again for the salvation of men. In the next chapter but two we find Paul preaching to his own countrymen in Antioch, and again first setting forth Jesus as the Saviour whose shoes John the Baptist was not worthy to loose, and then declaring His death, and then announcing His resurrection, and then summing all up in the blessed words, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that

[1] Acts ix. 20. [2] Acts x. 43.

through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."[1] Believe what? Evidently the testimony they had just heard about the person, the death, and the resurrection of Christ; and, receiving this testimony as true, they evidently had the same authority for believing that their sins were forgiven, and that they were justified from all things, that they had for believing the statements to which they had listened.

This is still the plain and only way by which sinners are saved; for "to him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,"[2] and "therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed."[3] Yes, it is sure, and there are no "ifs" nor "ands" nor "buts" about it. God does not say to him that believeth, "if" he feels good; to him that believeth "and" does something else; to him that believeth "but" feareth; no! He says, To him that believeth, his faith is counted for righteousness. Luther used to say the devil would sometimes come to him with the question, "Martin, do you feel that you are saved?" "No," the man taught of the Spirit would reply, "I do not *feel* it, but I *know* it." It is said that toward the close of the first Napoleon's career he was one day reviewing his troops in Paris, when having inadvertently dropped the bridle-reins of the horse he was riding, the spirited

[1] Acts xiii. 38, 39. [2] Rom. iv. 5. [3] Rom. iv. 16.

animal gave a bound and came near dashing the emperor to the earth. A young soldier standing in the lines sprang forward, and, seizing the bit, saved the chieftain from a fall. Napoleon, glancing at him, said, in his quick, curt way, "Thank you, captain." The soldier, knowing his peculiarities, looked up with a smile, and inquired, "Of what regiment, sire?" "Of my guards," replied the emperor, and galloped away. The soldier had no epaulettes on his shoulders and no sword at his side to prove his rank, but instantly laying his musket on the ground, with the remark, "Let whoever will, carry it; I am done with it," he proceeded to join a group of staff-officers standing at a little distance. One of them, seeing him approach, said, "What is this insolent fellow doing here?" "This insolent fellow," responded the soldier, looking the other steadily in the eye—"this insolent fellow is a captain of the guards." "Why, man," replied the officer, "you are deranged; why do you speak thus?" "*He* said it," shouted the soldier, pointing to the emperor, far down the lines. "I beg your pardon, captain," responded the officer; "I was not aware of your promotion."

And now, my friend, "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved;" and if the world, the flesh, or the devil asks you how you know you are saved, reply by looking up to Jesus, at the right hand of the Father, and boldly exclaim, "He said it." Surely He *has* said it in the "word of God, which liveth and abideth for-

ever," [1] and who shall gainsay it? You are authorized to believe this very moment that He bare your sins in His own body on the tree; and if He bare them in His own body, they cannot be found on you. You are commanded to believe that He put away sin, root and branch, by the sacrifice of Himself; and if He put it away, it can no longer be upon your conscience. You are entreated to accept as true the testimony of God that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures—not according to our feelings, or deservings, but according to the Scriptures—and he who believes this may *know* upon that same testimony that he is saved. Oh, that you may believe God as Abraham did when "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; [for it glorifies and pleases God to have us believe him;] and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe in him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, [not by feelings or works] we have [not hope to have, nor try to have] peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." [2]

[1] 1 Pet. i. 23.

[2] Rom. iv. 20–25; v. 1, 2.

"Faith is a very simple thing,
Though little understood;
It frees the soul from death's dread sting
By *resting* in the blood.

"Faith is not what we *feel* or see,
It is a simple *trust*
In what the God of love has said
Of Jesus as 'the Just.'

"What Jesus is, and that alone,
Is faith's delightful plea;
It never deals with *sinful* self,
Nor *righteous* self IN ME.

"It tells me I am counted '*dead*'
By God, in His own word;
It tells me I am '*born again*'
In Christ, my RISEN LORD.

"If He is free, then I am free
From *all* unrighteousness;
If He is just, then I am just,
HE is my righteousness."

CHAPTER XV

THE BELIEVER'S SAFETY

"For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."—*Romans* x. 11.

A YOUNG minister was in the habit of visiting an aged Scotch woman in his congregation who was familiarly called "Old Nanny." She was bedridden and rapidly approaching the end of her "long and weary pilgrimage," but she rested with undisturbed composure and full assurance of faith upon the finished work of Christ. One day he said to her, "Now, Nanny, what if, after all your confidence in the Saviour, and your watching and waiting, God should suffer your soul to be lost?" Raising herself on her elbow, and turning to him with a look of grief and pain, she laid her hand on the open Bible before her, and quietly replied, "Ah, dearie me, is that a' the length you hae got yet, man? God," she continued earnestly, "would hae the greatest loss. Poor Nanny would but lose her soul, and that would be a great loss indeed, but God would lose His *honor* and His *character*. Haven't I hung my soul upon His 'exceeding great and precious promises'? and if He brak' His word, He would make Himself a liar, AND A' THE UNIVERSE WOULD RUSH INTO CONFUSION."

This anecdote reveals the true ground of the be-

liever's safety. It is as high as the honor of God; it is as trustworthy as His character; it is as immutable as His promises; it is as broad as the infinite merits of His Son's atoning blood. There has long been a sharp controversy between theological writers concerning the doctrine of "the perseverance of the saints," as it is called, but, like most controversies among true Christians, it is owing largely to a misapprehension or misapplication of the terms employed in the dispute. The question, properly presented, is not about the perseverance of the saints, but the perseverance of the Lord. If the saints were left to themselves, it is not only probable, but certain, that they would not persevere, but if the Lord perseveres in His purpose of grace, it is not only probable, but certain, that they will be saved. Inasmuch, then, as the phrase, "perseverance of the saints," is not found in the Bible, and as it may possibly turn our attention from the Saviour to ourselves, which is always fraught with evil, I prefer to think of the perseverance of the Lord in speaking of the believer's safety.

"The Scripture saith," or, in other words, God saith in the Scripture, "whosoever believeth on him [that is, on Christ] shall not be ashamed." Mark the vast extent of this blessed declaration, "whosoever believeth." The word "whosoever" goes like the light over the entire surface of our globe, and includes within the ample and urgent invitations of the Gospel every member of the human race. There are many who fear that they do not belong to the elect, or that they are not embraced in the plan of redemption, and

hence they long to have some direct and personal evidence of the willingness of God to forgive and save *them*, but surely there is here full warrant for the faith of every sinner. The most illiterate, the most degraded, and the most friendless, as well as the intelligent, the virtuous, and the honored, among the sons of men, are invited, and exhorted, and commanded, to believe on Jesus Christ, for "whosoever believeth shall not be ashamed." This Divine proclamation is not only a good way, but unquestionably the best way that could be devised, to encourage the doubting and hesitating sinner to trust in the promises of God, for if there had been a better way, certainly it would have been adopted. Suppose there were a book somewhere in the world containing the names of all the saved in the past, present, and future. If you were to find *your* name on one of its countless pages, you would not be satisfied: because there may have been, or may be now, or may be hereafter, another person of the same name. Suppose the voice of God should speak down from heaven, as it did at the baptism and transfiguration of His well-beloved Son, audibly and articulately announcing you to be one of His redeemed children; still you would not be satisfied, because you might fear your ears had deceived you, or that the announcement was intended for a different person. But when the voice of God saith in the Scripture, "whosoever believeth," you *know* that you are brought within the circle of mercy and designated in a surer manner than by name.

If a wealthy and benevolent gentleman were to

advertise that *whosoever* applied at his residence before a certain day should receive a valid title to a valuable piece of property, you would not refuse to apply because he had not mentioned your name in the advertisement. If you were travelling on a railroad with a number of passengers, and the conductor should announce that *whosoever* is going to the place you are anxious to reach must leave the train at the next station, you would not retain your seat and be carried away from your destination because he did not call out your name. If you were in a city besieged by a powerful army, and the commanding officers of the opposing forces should order a suspension of hostilities that *whosoever* among the inhabitants desired to remove to a place of safety might withdraw before the assault was made, you would not complain because your name did not occur in the order. In such cases a class is specified, and if you belong to the class you need no other warrant to act. In like manner, you have abundant authority for acting without a moment's delay upon the broad statements and general invitations of the Gospel. Jesus says, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."[1] "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."[2] Surely, you cannot ask or desire anything more earnest, more tender, more definite than this; and if

[1] John iii. 16. [2] Rev. xxii. 17.

it fails to convince you that *you* are authorized to believe on Christ, there is no conceivable mode by which you can be assured of God's willingness to save you.

But to make this point still clearer you will observe it is said, "Whosoever believeth in him." There is a difference between believing a person and believing *in* or *on* a person. The former implies that we accept his statements as true without going farther, but the latter implies that we trust *in* or rely *on* him. If a man of undoubted veracity were to inform us of something which he had witnessed, but of which we ourselves had no personal knowledge, we would believe him; but if he should promise to confer upon us a favor which we greatly desired to receive, we would confide *in* him or depend *on* him to fulfil his promise. Now, the salvation held out to us in the Gospel does not consist merely in the belief of certain doctrines, but belief in a person. Peter and the other apostles, in defending themselves before the Jewish council, said, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."[1] He showed Himself alive to His disciples, "after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God;"[2] and when He had "led them out as far as to Bethany,"[3] and had given His final commands, "while

[1] Acts v. 30, 31. [2] Acts i. 3. [3] Luke xxiv. 50.

they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." [1] It is not, therefore, a dead but a living Christ which speaks to us in His word, and in whom we are urged to trust. From His exalted seat at the right hand of the Father He sees you now while reading these lines, and if it were best, He would instantly descend from heaven and stand before you in personal, visible form. So full of sympathy is His heart of love, and so deep His concern for your salvation, that the sight of your burdened soul would arrest His attention, I think, even if engaged in making a new world, and bring Him once more to the cross, could His death a second time avail more fully to deliver you from the condemnation and curse of God's violated law.

Suppose He should appear at this moment in your presence and with His own voice promise to give you the crown of eternal life before asking you to *do* anything or to *feel* anything. Would you trust in Him? Would you depend on Him to make good His promise? If you would, remember He speaks to you as truly and directly in His word as He could possibly do were He to reveal Himself bodily, so that your eyes could see Him and your ears could hear Him. It is the peculiarity of His word that, unlike any other word, it "liveth and abideth forever," [2] so that it is as fresh, and sweet, and powerful to-day as if it had just fallen from His lips. But there is this immense advantage in the written word over the spoken—that having once received assurance of salvation in the former

[1] Acts i. 9. [2] 1 Pet. i. 23.

you can always receive it there, for "the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."[1]

It is an unspeakable relief to the troubled sinner to find that this word which by the Gospel is preached unto you does not say, Whosoever believeth and is good; Whosoever believeth and feeleth happy; Whosoever believeth and prayeth well; Whosoever believeth and loveth God fervently; Whosoever believeth and findeth the true Church; but, "Whosoever believeth on him," or, in other words, "Whosoever trusteth in Christ, shall not be ashamed." Of course I am far from saying that the sincere believer will not follow holiness; or that he will not be happy; or that he will not hold communion with God; or that he will not love the Saviour and confess Him before men; but the sinner is not to be occupied with these first, for he needs first to be saved, and he is saved by believing, simply and only believing, in Jesus. Nor does the word intimate whether our belief must be strong or weak. It is not, Whosoever believeth strongly, but, Whosoever believeth. It is Jesus Christ who saves us, and not our belief; and hence, "if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed,"[2] or if, like the suffering woman "which had spent all her living upon physicians,"[3] your faith is greatly wanting in knowledge, still you may come, creeping, if you cannot walk, to that compassionate and gentle Saviour of whom it is written, "A bruised reed

[1] 1 Pet. i. 25. [2] Matt. xvii. 20.

[3] Luke viii. 43.

shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench." [1]

"Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." He shall not be ashamed to confess Him with the mouth, for the "righteous are bold as a lion," [2] and the saints of old "through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouth of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword; out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." [3] Nor shall he be ashamed "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." [4] The solemn language of our Lord does not apply to him: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." [5] On the other hand, he can joyfully exclaim with the apostle, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God [not the power of man, but the power of God] unto salvation to every one that believeth." [6] And again with the apostle he can say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." [7]

[1] Matt. xii. 20. [2] Prov. xxviii. 1. [3] Heb. xi. 33, 34.
[4] 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. [5] Mark viii. 38. [6] Rom. i. 16.
[7] Gal. vi. 14.

The secret of this bold confession of the crucified One, and of this strange glorifying in the cross, is given by the same apostle when he says, "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you."[1] The believer, then, *knows* upon the sure testimony of God's word that he shall not be ashamed at the coming of the Lord hereafter, and consequently he cannot be ashamed to own the Lord as his Saviour here.

The foundation of his safety is laid on the finished work of Christ, and is guarded by the infinite power, the eternal purpose, and the immutable promise of Jehovah. Nothing, therefore, in this world or in the world to come can blight his hopes or defeat his aspirations. "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."[2] In this most interesting and comforting passage the Holy Ghost first gives us to understand that God is for us, and hence triumphantly asks, Who can be against us? He then asserts that God's love for us is so great that He spared not His own Son, though He

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 13, 14. [2] Rom. viii. 31–34.

must endure the sorrow and shame, the deep humiliation and terrible agonies, of Gethsemane and Calvary, and makes this the proof of our Father's willingness to bestow upon us freely all things necessary to secure the end of so much suffering, since the greater gift includes the less. He then challenges the universe to bring the slightest charge against those whom God Himself has justified. He then mentions the death of Christ, which was in the room and place of our death, because of our offences; and, as if this were not enough, He tells us of His resurrection, which is the unanswerable demonstration of our complete justification; and, as if this were not enough, he points to Him at the right hand of God, Head over all things to the Church, and swaying the sceptre of supreme sovereignty; and, as if this were not enough, He bids us listen to the ever prevalent intercession of One who could say even upon the earth, although despised and rejected of men, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I knew that thou hearest me always."[1] "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."[2]

It is not surprising that a chapter containing such a passage should begin by declaring that there is *no condemnation* against the believer, and end by declaring that there is *no separation* from the Saviour when once we truly believe on His name. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."[3] "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body,"[4]

[1] John xi. 41, 42.
[2] John xvii. 24.
[3] 1 Cor. ii. 10.
[4] 1 Cor. xii. 13.

no matter how widely removed from each other by time or place. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?"[1] asks the Psalmist. It is certain, then, that the Spirit is everywhere present, and is perfectly familiar with all that occurs in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, and in the darkness of the underworld, and yet having passed across the boundless empire which the word of the Almighty has created, and over the hell which sin has dug, He distinctly announces "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."[2]

There are thousands of Christians who, on the pretence of humility, make a merit of doubting their salvation, but in the light of such statements as you have just read the faintest shadow of doubt is seen to be a grievous dishonor to God. If doubts are becoming to those who are believers, God is a liar, but if God speaks the truth, how should we look upon our doubts, and how should we regard ourselves for calling in question His clear and oft-repeated testimony? But, you may reply, your difficulty does not lie in this direction. You firmly believe, you say, that God speaks the truth, but you doubt your acceptance, you doubt whether you are saved, because your faith is so weak, and your love is so cold, and your feelings are so variable, and there is so much evil in you, and you make so little progress, or none at all that you can

[1] Ps. cxxxix. 7. [2] Rom. viii. 38, 39.

perceive, in holiness. Now, it is not for man to decide whether you are or are not a believer in Christ, but I do confidently affirm that these things have nothing whatever to do with the ground upon which God makes peace with the sinner, though they may have much to do with our enjoyment of peace.

When Jehovah in infinite grace redeemed Israel from Egyptian bondage, what was the ground of their peace and the precise cause of their deliverance? It was not their goodness in any respect; for they were certainly no better by nature nor by practice, for aught we are told, than the Egyptians, and there was nothing to recommend them to the Divine mercy but their utter wretchedness. "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob."[1] But before He could deal with them in manifested love He must first deal with their sins in manifested righteousness. Their lives were forfeited by reason of their iniquities, and the judgment must descend: but in the tenderness of God's compassion for His covenant people it descended upon the head of a divinely-appointed Substitute. They were commanded to slay a lamb, and to take the blood —"for the blood is the life"[2]—and to strike it on the two side-posts and on the upper door-post of their houses. "And the blood," it is added, "shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are: and

[1] Ex. ii. 23, 24. [2] Deut. xii. 23.

when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." [1]

The blood made all the difference that existed between the Israelites and the Egyptians, for it was a token that the sentence of death had already been executed in the behalf of those within the blood-sprinkled houses, because it had fallen upon their representative and substitute. The slightest doubt of safety, therefore, on the part of an Israelite sheltered behind those red door-posts, would have been the same as saying that Jehovah is a liar. He had said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you," and this ought to have been enough: it was enough for all who believed His word. Some of them may have complained that their faith was so weak, and their love was so cold, and their feelings were so variable, and there was so much evil in them, and so little progress in holiness, that they could not see the evidences of their salvation. But this was not the question. God did not say, "When you see the evidences," but, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." He did not say, When I see your strong faith, your ardent love, your happy feelings, your victory over the evil of your nature, your rapid growth in holiness, I will pass over you, but, When I see the blood, I will pass over you. It was not the blood and something else, but it was the blood by itself, the blood which God provided, that formed the ground of their safety and their redemption. During that frightful night of

[1] Ex. xii. 13.

destruction there may have been fathers and mothers who, hearing the shrieks of the terror-stricken Egyptians, caught their first-born to their hearts in inexpressible anxiety, but if so, their fear was a most ungenerous and unworthy suspicion of the God of their salvation, for they were as secure from harm as the power and purpose and promise of the Almighty could make them.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BELIEVER'S SAFETY

LET us take from the Old Testament Scripture one more illustration of the believer's perfect safety on the ground that blood has been shed, or that life has been given up in the stead of his life. On the great day of atonement Aaron was directed to select two goats, one for the Lord and the other for the scapegoat. "And Aaron," it is said, "shall bring the goat upon which the LORD'S lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering."[1] The victim was not presented as a burnt-offering, for that was a type of Christ, who "offered himself without spot to God,"[2] not as a sin-bearer, but "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor."[3] Nor was he presented as a meat-offering; for that was a type of Christ in His faultless life on earth, fulfilling all His duties to man as man. Nor was he presented as a peace-offering; for that was a type of our communion with God in Christ, so that it can be said, "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."[4] But he was presented distinctly as a sin-offering, to put away iniquity from the sight of a holy God. Having been slain, the high priest was commanded to bring his blood within the veil of the tab-

[1] Lev. xvi. 9.
[2] Heb. ix. 14.
[3] Eph. v. 2.
[4] Eph. ii. 13.

ernacle where Jehovah dwelt, and to sprinkle the blood upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat seven times, or the complete number. Then he was to go out unto the altar that is before the Lord (see Leviticus xvi. 18), and sprinkle the blood upon it seven times. Afterwards, it is said, "Aaron shall lay both hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited." [1]

The act of laying both the hands upon the head of the goat showed that the guilt of the people was transferred or imputed to their substitute, because, the blood being shed, the law of God was perfectly satisfied, the demands of His justice were thoroughly met, and in unsullied righteousness He could now put away their sin. "The life of the flesh is in the blood," we are told, "for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." [2] Mark that! "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul;" or, as the word translated atonement here properly means "to cover or cover over," it is the blood that covereth over the sins of the soul; and because covered over with blood so that God's pure eyes cannot see them, at-one-ment is made, and God and the sinner are brought together in peace. Hence it is said, "The goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities [not some of them

[1] Lev. xvi. 21, 22. [2] Lev. xvii. 11.

merely, but all of them] unto a land not inhabited," and there they are lost to view forever. If, then, any of the assembled Israelites who watched the high priest coming forth from the presence of the Lord to sprinkle the altar with the blood of the slain goat, and to lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, should doubt for a single moment the forgiveness of all their iniquities, it would be in effect to say that the blessed God had uttered a falsehood. It was not a question of fitness or unfitness, of feeling or of realization, on their part, but it was a simple question concerning the veracity of the Holy One of Israel, who had said, "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul," and, "The goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited."

Let us turn now to the New Testament, and we find it written, "Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"[1] "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood

[1] Heb. ix. 11–14.

of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."[1] "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."[2] "In whom we have [not hope to have, nor try to have, nor shall have, but *have*] redemption through his blood."[3] "Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."[4] "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross,"[5] of course we may add, *we* do not have to make peace, for it is already made, and all we are asked to do is to accept the overtures of peace extended so freely and generously in the Gospel. Such is the plain testimony of the Holy Ghost, and to this must be added the testimony of the translated saints in heaven, as recorded by the Holy Ghost in the book of Revelation. Certainly those who are in glory know how they got there, and the Spirit tells us they raise their anthems of praise to the Lamb, saying, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."[6]

It is the blood, then, not example, nor influence, nor power, but the precious blood of Christ alone, that forms the ground of the believer's safety. It is not the blood and something else—the blood and our estimate of it, the blood and our thoughts about it, the blood and our feelings—but the blood by itself

[1] 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. [2] 1 John i. 7. [3] Eph. i. 7.
[4] Rom. v. 9. [5] Col. i. 19, 20. [6] Rev. v. 9, 10.

which was poured out upon the cross more than nineteen hundred years ago; and if you believe that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth you from all sin, according to the testimony of God's word you are saved. God is infinitely satisfied with it; and if you are satisfied, there can be no further cause of controversy between you and Him. His own dear Son, who knew no sin, was made to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He took our place under the law with all its dreadful consequences that we might be exalted to His place in heaven with all its unspeakable blessedness. He was cast out of His Father's presence as evil that we might stand in His Father's presence without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. He bore the curse which we merited that we might receive the blessing which He merited. He drank the cup of wrath which was pressed to our lips that we might drink of the fountain of the water of life freely. He endured the condemnation which was due to us that we might obtain the justification which was due to Him. He went down into the jaws of death that were ready to devour us that we might rise to a rapturous immortality. He was regarded and treated as sin that we might be regarded and treated as righteousness, and that the righteousness of God. Blessed Saviour! eternity will be too short to speak Thy praise.

When I say that the believer is regarded and treated as righteousness, I do not mean to affirm that he is merely regarded and treated as *righteous*, for he *is* righteous. God Himself declares him righteous, and

"we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth."[1] He cannot declare a thing to be true which is really untrue, and at best a sham, such as many of our theologians make the believer's standing to be. They deny that he is righteous, but argue that God treats him *as if* he were righteous; or, in other words, they represent the blessed God as a party to a wretched delusion and pretence. If the believer is not righteous, God cannot treat him as righteous, but he *is* righteous, perfectly righteous, in Christ, for "by him all that believe are justified from all things."[2] Christ's standing, then, is the believer's standing. The measure of Christ's acceptableness in the sight of the Father is the precise measure of the acceptableness of the believer; and if you ask me to define a believer, I reply in the one word, Christ. We are "accepted in the beloved."[3] "We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ."[4] "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ;"[5] and hence the oneness between the two is so entire that the whole body is called Christ, "and ye are complete in him."[6] "Herein is our love [love with us, not our love to God, but God's love to us] made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world;"[7] not simply, so shall we be in the world to come, but, so *are* we in *this* world. The

[1] Rom. ii. 2. [2] Acts xiii. 39. [3] Eph. i. 6.
[4] 1 John v. 20. [5] 1 Cor. xii. 12. [6] Col. ii. 10.
[7] 1 John iv. 17.

fact is, whatever Christ did in achieving redemption He did "for us," and, if I may so say, *as us.* He stood, as we were, under the law, that we might stand, as He is, before the Father. God, therefore, sees us *as Christ* in His presence, for He "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus."[1] He no longer views us as on the earth, but in heaven, and we appear to Him as Christ does. He sees us through the perfect righteousness of Christ, and "as he is, so are we."

Such, then, is the believer's standing, and if so, where are his sins? Let Hezekiah answer, who said to God in his prayer, "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back"[2]—not only some of them, but *all* of them, were cast behind God's back, and therefore could no longer be seen by Him. Let the prophet reply who, predicting the future restoration and conversion of Israel, exclaims, "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."[3] Here, then, are *all* the sins of the believer drowned in the deep waters of oblivion, and not a ripple is left on the surface to indicate where they are buried. Is it not a pitiful business for the Christian to be always diving down in the attempt to drag to the surface these loathsome things and hold them up in the face of a smiling God? Be sure there is no merit in groaning forever over your sins when you are plainly and repeatedly told that they have been removed from you

[1] Eph. ii. 6. [2] Isa. xxxviii. 17. [3] Mic. vii. 19.

"as far as the east is from the west."[1] God, of course, not only knows all that will occur in the future, but He remembers all that has occurred in the past, except one thing. There is one thing which He is pleased to forget, and if you wish to know what this is, you read in the Old Testament and twice in the New Testament, that, speaking of those who believe on His Son, He says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."[2] "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he [God] quickened together with him [Christ], having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."[3] There was everything against the believer once, but there is nothing against him now, for the law, or the handwriting of ordinances, having been righteously and completely met and satisfied, it has been blotted out; and then, as if the tablet or parchment on which it was written might still terrify the Christian, it has been taken out of the way and nailed in triumph to the cross as an open proclamation to the universe that "there is therefore now no [not one] condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."[4] He has become the all-sufficient substitute for those who believe on Him, and hence the law has no further claim upon them. Let us suppose that during the late war a man was drafted into the army. Let us suppose that he did not choose

[1] Ps. ciii. 12.
[2] Heb. viii. 12; x. 17.
[3] Col. ii. 13, 14.
[4] Rom. viii. 1.

to fight, and consequently procured a substitute to go in his place. Let us suppose that the substitute was killed in the next battle, and that under another act of conscription the man was again drafted. In that case he would have refused to go or to procure a substitute, on the ground that he was already *dead* so far as the law was concerned. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." [1]

But in addition to all that has been said, it is well to consider for a moment the believer's new nature as another proof of his perfect safety. The Saviour says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" [2] and the Spirit says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." [3] "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." [4] "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." [5] Of such passages I can only repeat what was said about the believer being called "righteous" in the Bible. God does not treat him merely *as if* righteous, but he *is* righteous. So God does not speak of him *as if* born again, but he *is* born again. He is as truly "born of God," "born of the Spirit," and made a "partaker of the Divine nature," as he is born of man, born of the flesh, and made a partaker of the nature of his earthly parents. There are many who compare the adoption of Christians mentioned in the Scriptures with the

[1] Rom. vii. 4. [2] John iii. 3. [3] 1 John v. 1.
[4] Gal. iii. 26. [5] 2 Pet. i. 4.

adoption which takes place among men, but there is a wide difference. With men children are transferred to a family to which they do not belong by birthright, and treated *as if* they had been born in the household that now shelters them; but God adopts His own children, having first made them "partakers of the divine nature" by the power of His Spirit through faith in the promises of His word. Hence it is written, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."[1] "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."[2]

No man can say to God, "Abba, Father," unless he is born again by believing that Jesus is the Christ; and when the unregenerate mumble the words, "Our Father which art in heaven," they offer a worship not a whit more intelligent or acceptable than the prostration of the native African before his fetich. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked;"[3] for "he that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him."[4] Those who pray without faith in the Son of the Father's love may be very religious, as the Athenians were who reared an altar TO THE UNKNOWN GOD, but surely they are not Christians; and the difference between being a Christian and being religious

[1] Rom. viii. 15.
[2] Gal. iv. 4, 6.
[3] Gal. vi. 7.
[4] John v. 23.

is just the difference there is between light and darkness, between heaven and hell. On the other hand, whosoever believeth on Christ is surely born of God; and the thought that God can suffer His own child—a part of Himself, if I may so speak—to be eternally lost, is too monstrous to be entertained for a moment. If you are a father or a mother, you know what it is to love a little child, although the helpless babe may be nothing but an expense to you, and may not at all respond to your love. Your death would not disturb its happiness, nor would it retain the slightest recollection of you, and yet you hang over it with unutterable affection and tenderness. What, then, must be the love of God for His children, redeemed by the blood of His only begotten Son, although they do so little in His service and feel so faintly His claims upon their gratitude! "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."[1] This language was addressed to the Israelites as such, but it may be applied without the slightest strain to every one who is born again in the present or church dispensation. I will go further, and state that God loves you, if you are a believer, as He loves His "well-beloved Son." Do not be staggered at such an assertion, but open wide your heart to receive the blessed truth; for the Saviour says in His touching prayer for all His disciples, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou

[1] Isa. xlix. 15.

hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." [1]

To this must be added the work of the Holy Spirit; and in glancing at it you need to be guarded at the outset against two errors into which many sincere believers are led to their own disquietude and distress. The first arises from the common mistake of seeking amid the fruits of the Spirit for the ground of peace. It can never be found there. It is not the Spirit's work *in* us, but Christ's work *for us*, that delivers us from condemnation and places us on the heavenward side of the cross beyond Judgment; and it is only by looking at Christ's finished work instead of the Spirit's unfinished work that we can find perfect repose of conscience and heart. The second error arises from the still more common mistake of thinking, or, at least, of practically acting, about the Spirit as if He came on occasional and uncertain visits to the believer, in place of knowing that He abides with us forever. Many Christians are continually singing and praying, "Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove," but He is already come. They may say they know this, and do not intend to intimate that He is really absent from them, but it is very important to avoid the use of language that does not express the precise truth on such a subject. Owing to the constant employment of incorrect language, even admitting a correct knowledge lying back of it, it has come to pass that multitudes are guilty of the fearful sin of regarding the Spirit rather as an influence than as a Divine person,

[1] John xvii. 23.

and multitudes more look upon Him as a cloud moving about from one church to another, or visiting some sections of the country with His refreshing presence, while other sections are necessarily left during His absence parched and desolate.

When our Lord was about to take His departure from the earth He said to His disciples, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."[1] "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"[2] "In whom [Christ] also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."[3] The sealing, then, with the Holy Spirit, not only marks the believer as God's property, but renders him perfectly secure, and is the "earnest of our inheritance," part of the inheritance already bestowed, as a Divine guarantee that all the rest will be given in due time, "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."[4] The Spirit, who abideth with us forever, who is in us, and who seals us unto the day of redemption, is never taken from us; and we would be far more profitably engaged if, instead of praying and singing, "Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove," we laid to heart the solemn admonition of the Sacred

[1] John xiv. 16, 17.
[2] 1 Cor. vi. 19.
[3] Eph. i. 13.
[4] Rom. xi. 29.

Scriptures addressed to Christians, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."[1] What we are called to do is to judge ourselves according to the word of Truth, and to put away all that the word shows us is a grief to the Holy Spirit: "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."[2] It is a sweet truth that the Lord judges and chastens His children not to condemn them, but to reclaim them from their wanderings; and the moment they repent of the evil into which they have been betrayed the Spirit again manifests the blessedness and energy of His presence. That Spirit never withdraws from true believers, and His permanent abode in their hearts becomes therefore the sure pledge of their salvation.

But it may be asked whether the consciousness of indwelling sin and the slow and irregular growth of most Christians in sanctification are not arguments against the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost, and hence against the believer's perfect safety? That they are not will be apparent if you will keep in mind who and what the believer is. As shown in a previous chapter, he is a child of man and at the same time a child of God. He has two natures, one born of the flesh and the other of the Spirit; one called the "old man," and the other the "new man." "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other."[3]

[1] Eph. iv. 30. [2] 1 Cor. xi. 31, 32. [3] Gal. v. 17.

As long, therefore, as the flesh is in him he will have a consciousness of sin in him; but if he is an intelligent believer, he will not have a conscience of sins *on him*, "because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins."[1] Christ hath "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;"[2] and if it is put away, it can no longer be on the believer. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree;"[3] and if He bare them in His own body, surely they cannot be on us. The condemning power of sin, therefore, or its power to destroy, is forever gone, even while its presence in the old nature is still a source of mortification and annoyance. Suppose an enormous serpent should spring upon you from its covert and fold you in its horrid embrace, but as it was preparing, with glittering eye and darting tongue, to inflict the fatal sting, a friend standing near, by a well-directed blow, severed its head from the body, and it fell dead around your neck and arms. If you could not get rid of it immediately, but were compelled to carry it about for a while, its presence would doubtless distress and disgust you, and sometimes wring from you the anxious cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"[4] but you would know that it could no longer kill or injure you; "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin;"[5] "knowing this, that our old man is [*was*] crucified with him [Christ], that the body of sin might be des-

[1] Heb. x. 2. [2] Heb. ix. 26. [3] 1 Pet. ii. 24.
[4] Rom. vii. 24. [5] Rom. vi. 11.

troyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin;"[1] "for sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."[2] The consciousness of indwelling sin, therefore, cannot shake the security of the believer, because the Holy Spirit also dwells in him, the author and upholder of the "new creature" in Christ Jesus, and sweetly whispers to his troubled heart, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."[3]

In close connection with this, it may be useful to call your attention for a moment to the feeble and varying progress in sanctification which is a source of grief and dread to so many true Christians. They are perplexed and pained when they think of this important doctrine, because they view it only on one side, not remembering that, like almost every other truth of God's word, it has two sides, each of which must be carefully considered. If you look at justification, for example, you will find Paul arguing that on the Divine side, or in God's sight, it is by faith alone, while James argues that on the human side, or in man's sight, it is by works also. So on the Divine side, or in God's sight, our sanctification is by the blood of Christ, and complete as soon as we believe on Him, while on the human side, or in man's sight, it is progressive and carried on by the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and enabling us "more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness."

The fundamental idea, as well as the object, of Sanctification, is *fitness for the Divine presence and service*,

[1] Rom. vi. 6. [2] Rom. vi. 14. [3] Rom. xvi. 20.

and it is in this sense the word is used when I affirm that such fitness we have the moment we are in Christ by faith. Now, if you will turn to the Epistle to the Corinthians, you will see that the apostle addresses "the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus."[1] He is about to rebuke them for erroneous doctrines and evil practices, but still he does not hesitate to write to them as those that *are* sanctified. We look a little farther and read, "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."[2] Christ, then, is as much our sanctification as He is our wisdom, righteousness, and redemption. Many separate these words most unwarrantably, referring righteousness to Christ, but sanctification to ourselves, admitting that we must depend on Christ for righteousness, but supposing that we must depend upon our own exertions for sanctification; seeing clearly that we are justified by faith, but not seeing that we are sanctified by faith.

When our risen Lord appeared to Saul of Tarsus, on the road to Damascus, and converted him from the error of his way, He directed the regenerated persecutor to preach to the Gentiles, "that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."[3] It is not surprising, then, that this apostle, in writing to certain Christians, some of whom, he declares, had been fornicators, and idolaters, and adulterers, and thieves, and drunkards, should so boldly add, "But ye are

[1] 1 Cor. i. 2. [2] 1 Cor. i. 30. [3] Acts xxvi. 18.

washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." [1] They were as truly and completely sanctified as they were washed and justified. Accordingly, it is said that the Saviour came to do the will of God, "by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." [2] "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." [3] "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." [4] Hence the word of God places our justification and our sanctification on precisely the same Divine and immutable foundation, even the precious blood of Jesus. We are not partly justified, neither are we partly sanctified, and you have no better right to put the word "partly" before the word "sanctified," as it applies to the believer, than you have to put it before the word "justified."

The moment we are in Christ by believing on Him, God says we are sanctified—not shall be, nor try to be, nor hope to be, but "Ye are sanctified." Not only is it true that the justice of the satisfied law brings no accusation against us, but the holiness of the law finds no spot nor stain upon us; no, not the slightest. We are "clean every whit"—as clean as the blood of Christ and the will of God can make us. When we receive the Saviour by faith we do not receive a divided Saviour, but "Christ is all, and in all." [5] He is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and re-

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 11. [2] Heb. x. 10. [3] Heb. x. 14.
[4] Heb. xiii. 12. [5] Col. iii. 11.

demption, and sanctification no less than everything else the soul needs. It is forgetfulness or ignorance of this blessed truth that leads so many sincere believers to doubt their safety, and opens the way for Satan to cast the shadows of a deep gloom along the path of their pilgrimage. They are seeking for comfort in a gradual sanctification instead of an offered sacrifice—in a progressive work of holiness in them instead of an accomplished work of redemption already done for them. They will never find it thus. On the other hand, they will surely discover that the "flesh" is always the "flesh," and that the "old man" will be deceitful and desperately wicked to the end of the journey. But when we put on the "new man" our place and portion are in the heavenlies, and our position before God is perfect in every respect, for "we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ."[1] The practical results of this perfect sanctification will be more and more perfectly developed in the sight of men, and shine more and more unto the perfect day; but it is the happy privilege of the Christian to know that by the one offering of Christ he is perfected forever as already sanctified, and therefore, whatever conflicts and defeats he may meet on the way, it is still true that "whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

The limits which I have assigned to this chapter forbid a farther discussion of the subject at present, but it will come up again when we consider the promises addressed to the believer calling on the

[1] 1 John v. 20.

Lord. Enough, however, has been said to convince you, if you will receive the testimony of the word of Truth, that all, without exception, who trust in Jesus, are now and forever saved; for "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things [his promise and his oath], in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever, after the order of Melchisedek." [1]

"I hear the words of love,
I gaze upon the blood,
I see the mighty Sacrifice,
And I have peace with God.

"'Tis everlasting peace,
Sure as Jehovah's name;
'Tis stable as His steadfast throne;
Forevermore the same.

"The clouds may go and come,
And storms may sweep my sky:
This blood-sealed friendship changes not;
The cross is ever nigh.

"My love is ofttimes low,
My joy still ebbs and flows;
But peace with Him remains the same:
No change Jehovah knows.

[1] Heb. vi. 17-20.

"That which can shake the cross
May shake the peace it gave,
Which tells me Christ has never died,
Or never left the grave.

"I change, He changes not;
The Christ can never die;
His love, not mine, the resting-place;
His truth, not mine, the tie."

CHAPTER XVII

THE BELIEVER CALLING ON THE LORD

"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."—*Romans* x. 12.

WHEN Peter was directed by the Spirit to visit the Roman centurion, Cornelius, in the city of Cesarea, he listened with amazement to the statements of the Gentile officer, and then opened his mouth and said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."[1] Of course he did not mean to teach that the fear of God and our personal works of righteousness form the ground or reason of our acceptance, for such a doctrine would not only contradict the whole tenor of Sacred Scripture, but it would be in direct conflict with the apostle's own testimony on this very occasion. At the close of the address of which the words just quoted are the beginning, after speaking of the death and resurrection of Jesus, he adds, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."[2] He could not, therefore, be guilty of the absurdity of affirming in one breath that we are saved by our fear of God and works of righteousness, and

[1] Acts x. 34, 35. [2] Acts x. 43.

in another breath that we are saved according to the witness of all the prophets only through faith in Christ. He obviously designed to assert that whatever is acceptable to Jehovah in one nation is acceptable in any other, without reference to the ground of acceptance. Man's filial fear of God and works of righteousness are nowhere in the Bible presented as the cause, but as the consequence, of acceptance. They are not the conditions on which salvation is bestowed, but the fruits of salvation received.

These fruits, however, are not now confined to the land of Palestine, "for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek." Once saving mercy was revealed to a single race, but when "God was manifest in the flesh," [1] to accomplish human redemption, grace overflowed, as it were, the narrow bounds, and spread like a sea of glory from pole to pole. In the language of Dr. Chalmers, commenting on the words placed at the head of this chapter, the precious truth here announced "invests with an ample warrant the messengers of salvation, who might go forth the bearers of a full and unexpected commission, to assail even a whole world lying in wickedness and unconcern, by plying with the overtures of a free salvation, each and every individual of the great human family. God, it is said here, makes no difference between the Jew and the Greek; and there are some who, in defending the articles of their own scientific theology, would make the universality of the Gospel offer lie in this, that now, when the middle wall of partition is

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 16.

broken down, it might be offered to men of every nation. But the scriptural theology carries the universality farther down than this—and so as that the Gospel might be offered, not merely to men of every nation, but to each man of every nation. God is not only no respecter of nations, He is no respecter of persons. It is not only whatsoever nation shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved, but whatsoever man of that nation shall call upon the name of the Lord, he shall be saved."

The word Lord as a title descriptive of God always refers in the New Testament to Jesus Christ, except in the few instances where the context shows that the Father or the Holy Ghost is meant. When, therefore, it is written, "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him," our minds are to turn particularly to the Second person of the adorable Trinity, though, of course, not to the exclusion of the First and Third persons. What one does the others do, and the purposes and resources of one are the purposes and resources of the others. But because of Christ's atoning death on the cross, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."[1] The Spirit of truth also, says the Saviour, "shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and

[1] Phil. ii. 9–11.

he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."[1] Both of these Divine persons, then, rejoice to see the Son honored, and listen, no doubt, with delight to the voices of believers singing the noble hymn:

"All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
To crown Him Lord of all."

It is a sweet consolation to many souls, burdened with the crushing memory of some past crime or with the heavy sorrows of life, to feel that they can go with their confessions and supplications directly to "the second man, the Lord from heaven."[2] If they are trusting in Him alone for salvation, they can understand the cheering language of the inspired apostle when he says, "Seeing, then, that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."[3] An unconverted friend of mine, in extreme sickness and suffering, replied to a visitor who urged him to look to God for help, "Do not talk to me about God, whom I cannot comprehend, but tell me about Jesus,

[1] John xvi. 13, 14. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 47 [3] Heb. iv. 14–16.

for my thoughts can grasp one who as a man has the experience and sympathies of a man." His language is not to be approved, for the Saviour says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;"[1] and as this Saviour is called "the word,"[2] He sustains to the unseen Father the same relation that a word does to thought: He is God expressed or uttered, if I may so speak, "for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."[3]

Still, without detracting in the slightest degree from the infinite love and tenderness of the Father, there are periods in our history which drive us with our petitions more immediately to Him who knew, as we know, the force of fierce temptations, and who, "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."[4] "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."[5] All that call upon Him in all their manifold trials and various troubles address their supplications to a gracious Lord who trod the rough path they are required to follow, and hence can enter into their feelings, share their sufferings, and pity their infirmities. A number of persons may assemble at a funeral,

[1] John xiv. 9. [2] John i. 1. [3] Col. ii. 9.
[4] Heb. i. 3. [5] Heb. ii. 16–18.

and all of them will know that the mother or wife who is weeping by the side of her dead is sorely bereaved, but they who have endured a similar affliction will know it in a different sense from the others and utter their words of condolence with a deeper meaning. So the Lord on whom we call, and "who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death," [1] has a personal and practical acquaintance with the anxieties and cares to which His disciples are exposed, and whispers to their troubled hearts words of most precious sympathy. "In all their affliction he was afflicted." [2] "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." [3] "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." [4]

But you will observe that only believers can truly call on Him: for unless we believe that He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and now liveth to make intercession for us, Head over all things to the Church, King of kings, and Lord of lords, it is impossible to present our petitions before His throne. When, therefore, we pray to Him, we are praying to One whom it is our duty to honor in all respects even as we honor the Ancient of days from whose bosom He came down into our world; though it is a more exact definition of Christian prayer to say that it is the sincere expression of our hearts' desires to God the Father, in the name of God the Son, for those things that are

[1] Heb. v. 7.
[2] Isa. lxiii. 9.
[3] Isa. liii. 4.
[4] Matt. viii. 17.

suggested to us by God the Holy Ghost. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."[1] Again, our Saviour declares, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."[2] Here, then, we learn that the Spirit helpeth our infirmities by showing us what we should pray for as we ought, and that our supplications are to be offered in the name of Jesus, who speaks as a mighty God and promises to do whatsoever we thus ask. Hence the important question at once arises, What is it to ask in the name of Jesus? Is it merely to *say* at the conclusion of our prayers, "This we ask in the name or for the sake of Jesus"? Surely not.

Suppose you were exceedingly anxious to obtain a favor from an earthly potentate, but knew that you had no influence whatever in his court, and that you could not even gain admittance into his presence without the aid of others. In this extremity you go to a friend who stands higher in the esteem of the monarch than all other persons in the realm, and who is deeply interested in the success of your suit. He gives you a letter of introduction and recommendation, warmly espousing your cause. With such a letter you may command easy access to the throne, and while urging your request you are but expressing the known wishes of your powerful friend, and represent-

[1] Rom. viii. 26. [2] John xiv. 13, 14.

ing him indeed in the audience-chamber of the sovereign. You are speaking as he would have you speak, as he would speak if he were in your place, and your petition is granted because it is understood to convey the desires of one who may not be denied. Suppose you should present your check with nothing but your own signature upon it at the counter of a bank where not a cent was on deposit to your credit. Of course it would be instantly rejected, but if you should return and exhibit a check signed by a friend who had thousands stored away in the coffers of the association, it would be promptly accepted and paid, because you would appear in the name and as the representative of another who was entitled to the highest consideration.

In like manner, if you attempt to approach the eternal throne in your own name or depending for acceptance upon the fact that you pray, we well know the result, for God's word says, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."[1] "If I regard iniquity in my heart," says the Psalmist, "the Lord will not hear me."[2] "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight."[3] Now, the fact is we have all turned away the ear from hearing the law; we have all regarded iniquity in the heart, and continue to regard it until born again through faith in Christ, for it is the crowning sin of man's innumerable transgressions that he refuses to believe on Jesus; we all bring forward, in

[1] Prov. xxviii. 9. [2] Ps. lxvi. 18. [3] Prov. xv. 8.

our vain religiousness, the sacrifice of the wicked, and never present the prayer of the upright until we are made the righteousness of God in His dear Son. But when we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is freely offered to us in the Gospel, then He gives us His own standing before the Father's throne; then we know what it is to pray in His name; for God sees us in Him, and hears in our prayer His voice, for He and we are one; we representing Him in the presence of God; to pray sustained by the infinite merits of His atoning blood; to pray endorsed by Him as His friends and brethren; to pray, as He would have us pray, under the suggestions and teachings of His blessed Spirit abiding with us forever.

Hence we see how fearfully abused and perverted is that beautiful form of supplication commonly called the Lord's Prayer. The meaningless jargon of the rudest heathenism is not a more shocking mockery of true and acceptable worship than is the manner in which multitudes in Christian lands are in the habit of saying, "Our Father which art in heaven." Thousands of the unregenerate, who are bound, soul and body, to the world by the ties of an idolatrous attachment, and who rush with mad eagerness from one scene to another of God-forgetting and God-defying revelry, hope to gain the ear of the Almighty by the utterance of this sublime language, and thus lull the conscience into the fatal slumber of a profounder insensibility. They do not seem to know that we are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and

hence that believers alone can say with any propriety, "Our Father which art in heaven." One single petition in this wonderful prayer would consign them to perdition if answered. Let any man intelligently and sincerely address the Searcher of hearts with the words, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;" and if he depends on this for salvation, he simply invokes destruction upon himself; for if the Divine forgiveness is extended to him only *as* he extends forgiveness to those indebted to him, a moment's serious reflection will convince him that he is hopelessly lost. But even if we were able to forgive others as fully and freely as we desire God to forgive us, still this could not be the meritorious cause of our salvation, unless the whole work of Christ is in vain, and unless the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation is an idle fable, for it declares in every conceivable form of statement that "without shedding of blood is no remission."[1]

The name of Jesus is nowhere mentioned in the prayer, and it was plainly intended only for His disciples in their circumstances at that particular time. It was given to them before He became the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, and opened a new and living way of access to the Father through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. There is not the slightest allusion to it in any of the inspired Epistles, nor is there the slightest reason to suppose that it was designed for permanent use, although it must forever remain unspeakably precious

[1] Heb. ix. 22.

to the Christian because it is in the words of our Lord, and contains a remarkable summary of the petitions proper for those who are already saved through the merits of His blood. We have His own authority for asserting that He did not require its continued employment after His death, and resurrection, and the descent of the Holy Ghost; for when He was about to take His departure from the disciples He addressed them thus: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."[1] Again, "At that day ye shall ask in my name."[2] At what day? The day when the promised Spirit should come to teach them the true nature of His kingdom, and of their mission, and to gather out of the world a church to be builded together for a habitation of God. After that day the disciples had very different views of the purpose of Christ's first advent to earth, and of the testimony of the Gospel, and of their oneness with the Saviour; and therefore the prayer which they used as children slowly learning the alphabet of Christianity could not suitably and fully express their enlarged desires when enlightened by the Holy Ghost to behold the matchless worth of the name of Jesus.

Praying in that name, they had the positive, unmistakable assurance that whatsoever they asked He would do it that the Father might be glorified in the Son. It is so still; and if we would only pray in the

[1] John xvi. 23, 24. [2] John xvi. 26.

consciousness of our complete acceptance in Christ, and as expressing His mind and will, we could remove mountains, and nothing should be impossible unto us. Such prayer, though breathed by the prisoner in his lonely dungeon or lisped by the tongue of infancy, goes rushing across the universe, "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;"[1] swifter than the lightning; more powerful than the hurricane. "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."[2] "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."[3] "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"[4]

These promises, and scores of others like them that could be quoted, are to be taken in their plain, obvious sense, and they are not to be fettered by human doubt nor explained away by human criticism. The Sacred

[1] 2 Cor. x. 4.
[2] James v. 17, 18.
[3] Matt. xxi. 22.
[4] Matt. vii. 7–11.

Scriptures are full of striking illustrations which prove that God means precisely what He says when He declares that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,"[1] "for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." He is rich in all the plenitude of the Divine perfections; rich in the absolute control of His boundless empire that in all its shining suns and countless systems, in all its loftiest intelligences and minutest forms of life, is subject to His imperial command; and rich in the inexhaustible fulness of His love to believers of every race and rank. He possesses omnipotence, and is able therefore to help His people who call on Him: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."[2] "All power," He says, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth;"[3] and He proclaims Himself to be the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."[4]

He possesses omniscience, and can therefore foresee and guard against all the schemes of devils and all the contingencies of human events that may threaten to arrest the bestowal of His purposed and promised blessings upon His disciples. "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered,"[5] He says; and, "I

[1] James v. 16. [2] Col. i. 16, 17. [3] Matt. xxviii. 18.
[4] Rev. i. 8. [5] Luke xii. 7.

am he which searcheth the reins and hearts,"[1] He declares. "Lord," exclaimed Peter, "thou knowest all things;"[2] and hence it is evident that His mind is perfectly familiar with all that has occurred in the past, and all that shall occur in the future; and takes knowledge not only of the march of tempests, the revolution of planets and the rise and fall of empires, but also of the silent budding of a rose and the noiseless flight of an insect. Like the ocean,

> "Vast as it is, it answers as it flows,
> The breathing of the lightest air that blows."

He possesses unchangeable faithfulness, and therefore we may rely upon His word with implicit confidence. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it,"[3] writes the apostle. "The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil."[4] "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for he is faithful that promised)."[5] "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True."[6] He possesses infinite love for those who have been redeemed with His precious blood, and therefore cannot deny them any petition which it is best for them to receive. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."[7] "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his

[1] Rev. ii. 23. [2] John xxi. 17. [3] 1 Thess. v. 24.
[4] 2 Thess. iii. 3. [5] Heb. x. 23. [6] Rev. xix. 11.
[7] John xiii. 1.

life for his friends."[1] "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."[2] "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you."[3] "The life which I now live in the flesh," says Paul, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."[4] "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."[5]

Oh, how rich He is in His own eternal and immeasurable resources to all that call on Him! There is no possible condition in which we can be placed that may deprive us of the privilege of prayer; and quick as thought can ascend to our Lord at the right hand of the Father, His eye is turned towards our longing glance and His heart responds to our trustful desire. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."[6] He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,"[7] for the name by which He introduced Himself to Moses in the solitudes of Horeb, and the name that is still appropriate to Him, is the I AM. As another has beautifully said, in taking this title He was "furnishing His people with a blank check to be filled up to any amount. He calls Himself I AM, and faith has but to write over against that ineffably precious name

[1] John xv. 13. [2] John xiv. 21. [3] John xv. 9.
[4] Gal. ii. 20. [5] Eph. v. 25. [6] 1 John v. 14, 15.
[7] Eph. iii. 20.

whatever we want." Do we want pardon, justification, adoption, sanctification, support in weakness, consolation in sorrow, guidance in perplexity, deliverance from temptation, victory over death, full redemption, and unfading glory? I AM all this, says Christ, and all that you desire.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BELIEVER CALLING ON THE LORD

IN the light of this precious truth every believer may be addressed in the language of Elisha to "a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets," who was reduced to the last pot of oil, and whose sons were about to be taken by the creditor as bondmen. "Go," he said, "borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbors, even empty vessels; borrow not a few."[1] With faith in the word of God spoken by His servant, she obeyed the direction, and it was only when there was not a vessel more that the oil stayed. So, when we can go to the Lord emptied of self and the world, and relying with implicit confidence upon His promises, we shall receive from His inexhaustible resources "above all that we ask or think," and never until faith fails will the supplies which it commands cease. By a law more fixed and more unalterable than the law of gravitation, God has determined that whatsoever we ask in the name of Jesus, it shall be done for us. It may be that the instrumentality by which this amazing result is produced was included from the first in the department men call "natural," and that it belonged to the original, comprehensive plan which embraced the physical arrangement and government of the earth; but with-

[1] 2 Kings iv. 3.

out undertaking to discuss such a question, about the result itself there is not the shadow of doubt. Prayer ascends from an earnest heart for those things that are according to the will of our Lord; and without the slightest disturbance in the delicate mechanism of the universe, without the faintest discord in the "music of the spheres," as softly and silently as the snowflake falls from heaven, as certainly and surely as the ripened fruit drops from the shaken bough to the outstretched hand beneath, does it call down blessings upon the believing suppliant.

We are never straitened in God, but only in ourselves; for when temptations assail, or troubles arise, we too often fail to put Christ, by faith, between them and us, and too often through unbelief put them between Christ and us, so that we lose courage and power. Ten of the twelve spies who were sent from all the tribes of Israel to search out the land of Canaan returned in great fear, saying, "We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. . . . And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."[1] But Caleb endeavored to quiet the alarmed congregation with the bold language, "Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it," and Joshua and Caleb thus warned and encouraged their brethren: "Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defence is de-

[1] Num. xiii. 31-33.

parted from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not."[1] The ten fixed their minds upon the giants, not the Lord, and therefore could think of nothing but disaster, defeat, and death, while the two believers fixed their minds upon the Lord, not the giants, and therefore could think of nothing but deliverance, and success, and victory. The former were already unmanned because they looked not to the hills whence cometh our help, but the latter cared not whether their conflict lay with giants or grasshoppers, because they could confidently say, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them."[2] So when David was sent by his father, from attending a "few sheep in the wilderness," with parched corn and loaves of bread to his brothers in the Hebrew army, he found the host of Israel trembling at the boastful challenge of Goliath of Gath. Having obtained permission to meet the monster in mortal combat, he threw off the armor of Saul, in which faith could not freely move, and taking with him five smooth stones out of the brook and his sling in his hand, he went forth without the slightest trepidation. Saul and his soldiers thought only of Goliath, and were afraid, but David thought only of Jehovah, and hence could calmly reply to his mail-clad foe, "I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied;"[3] and the next instant a stone from his sling was buried in the forehead of the uncircumcised Philistine, and "he fell upon his face to the earth."

[1] Num. xiii. 30; xiv. 9. [2] 2 Kings vi. 16. [3] 1 Sam. xvii. 45.

Whenever Satan can divert our minds from the Lord to ourselves or to our circumstances, we are sure to lose heart and hope, and our prayers will be wanting in the essential elements of faith and fervor. Look, for example, at Moses, who "was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth," [1] and see how his meekness became weakness, and how his fortitude gave way to fear, and how he yielded to discouragement, despondency, and despair the moment he took his eyes from the Lord to view himself and his difficulties. "I am not able," he cried, "to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. [The Lord had not asked him to do it.] And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness." [2] Look at Job, of whom the Lord said unto Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" [3] "After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day. And Job spake, and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it." [4] Look at Elijah, who, as Moses was the meekest man and Job the most patient, may be called the bravest man on the earth, and yet, terrified at the threat of a woman whose powerful husband he had withstood to the face

[1] Num. xii. 3.
[2] Num. xi. 14, 15.
[3] Job i. 8.
[4] Job iii. 1–4.

and humbled into the dust, "he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."[1] Look at Jeremiah, who was sanctified before he came out of the womb and ordained to be a prophet unto the nations, and yet, after all his experience of the goodness of God, he bitterly exclaimed, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad. And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide; because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labor and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?"[2]

All this shows that Moses was not meek, and that Job was not patient, and that Elijah was not brave, and that Jeremiah was not submissive, except as their thoughts rested on the Lord. The moment their minds were occupied with themselves or with their circumstances, the first became irritable, and the second gave way to self-righteous complaints, and the

[1] 1 Kings xix. 3, 4. [2] Jer. xx. 14–18.

third was panic-stricken, and the fourth fell into the depths of despair. Thus do the distinguished men whose names have been given furnish a striking illustration, not only of the truth previously stated, that the "flesh" in a believer is no better than the "flesh" in an unbeliever, but of the importance of keeping the eye steadily fixed on the Lord if we would retain perfect composure of spirit amid our sharpest trials. Contrast their hasty and intemperate language with the calm and joyful words of the Son of man at a period in His earthly ministry darker than any known to the saints who had longed for His appearing. The generation that heard His tender messages of love heaped cruel slanders upon Him, saying, "Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber." Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, that had listened to His marvellous discourses and witnessed His mighty works, rejected with contempt His gentle entreaties and repelled with anger His solemn admonitions. He stood alone in the world He came to save, but "at that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth. . . . Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight,"[1] and then immediately followed the sweetest invitation ever addressed to the weary and sorrowful: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."[2] Blessed example! He kept His gaze constantly directed to His Father, and therefore nothing could disturb His peace or arrest the stream of grace that flowed from His loving heart.

[1] Matt. xi. 25, 26. [2] Matt. xi. 28.

We see, then, that we can never know in our own experience the riches of the Lord unto all that call upon Him unless our souls have formed the habit, so to speak, of looking to Him continually. There are many who pray "by fits and starts," now wrapped up in worldliness, and anon at a season of special religious interest, or under the pressure of some personal trouble, bethinking them of the God whom they have long neglected, and then wondering that they do not receive an immediate answer to their supplications. The Holy Ghost says, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."[1] The fearfully common sin, even among professed Christians, of making the glorious God a convenience or necessity in times of need, when ordinarily the mind is carried like a wind-driven wave hither and thither across the sea of life, may account for the number of prayers that are offered in vain. It is the privilege of every child of God to *abide* in the Saviour; to walk in the light as He is in the light; to have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ; and to maintain a communion with the Holy Spirit so intimate and so endearing that prayer will become as natural as breathing, and almost as constant. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."[2] "Pray without ceasing."[3] "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."[4]

[1] James i. 6, 7.
[2] Luke xviii. 1.
[3] 1 Thess. v. 17.
[4] Eph. vi. 18.

"In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."[1]

A Christian servant-girl overheard a number of ministers discussing the text, "Pray without ceasing," and found that at length they appointed one of their number to prepare an essay upon the subject to be read at their next meeting. She modestly expressed surprise to a fellow servant that they should take so much time about a passage of Scripture so plain and simple; and her remark having reached the ears of one of the ministers, he asked her why she thought it easy to understand the text. She replied with humility that it seemed to her believers were compelled to pray without ceasing, for everything they did reminded them of the Saviour and salvation. "When, for example," she went on to say, "I open my eyes in the morning, I praise God who hath shined into my heart to give me the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. When I dress, I bless Him for having clothed me in the spotless robe of His dear Son's righteousness. When I wash my face, I thank Him for the precious blood that cleanseth from all sin. When I kindle the fire, I think of the cloven tongues like as of fire, and the Holy Ghost who came down on the day of Pentecost to dwell with the disciples of Jesus forever. When I sweep the room, I ask that the Holy Spirit may remove from me all defilement, and keep me clean through the word. When I eat my breakfast, I turn my mind to

[1] Phil. iv. 6.

the Bread of heaven that daily nourishes my soul; and thus in all my little duties there is something that brings Christ before me and causes me to pray without ceasing."

If there were more Christians living, like the poor girl, in close and constant communion with Jesus, there would be fewer to exclaim, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!"[1] The trouble with too many of us is that we have learned to "*say* our prayers," as it is significantly called, and to be contented with a parrot-like repetition of words, without understanding or feeling their real import. Hence the formality and feebleness of our supplications until the Holy Spirit leads us back into real fellowship with God, when prayer becomes the delight of the soul and establishes it in a posture of unceasing worship before the throne. Then we can pray continually, even in the midst of our ordinary pursuits, in walking the streets, in turning the leaves of a book, in the pauses of a conversation. Then we can know how it was Nehemiah found time to pray when the king asked him a question, and when it was necessary that he should immediately answer. He was the cupbearer of Artaxerxes, and as he took up the wine to give it unto the monarch on a certain occasion, the latter noticed the sad expression of his face, and said to him, "Why is thy countenance sad?" It would not do to be sorrowful in the presence of royalty, and he was forced to confess that he mourned because, as he writes, "The city, the place of my fathers'

[1] Isa. xxiv. 16.

sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire. Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven; and I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it." [1]

He certainly did not go aside to pray, and he certainly had very little time to call upon the Lord, for the haughty Persian despot would not brook delay in response to a question; and yet between the question and the reply which promptly followed the Hebrew captive prayed to the God of heaven. He offered what is termed ejaculatory prayer, and as the word *ejaculatory* comes from a Latin word signifying a dart or javelin, his prayer darted up instantly to the throne of Jehovah, and as instantly gained the blessing he sought. So when our souls are in habitual communion with God we can flash forth our petitions, as it were, wherever we may be, and they are borne faster than by electric wires to the loving heart of the Saviour who said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." [2]

But it is important in this connection for the believer to inquire what motive leads him to pray or what object he hopes to attain. The Holy Ghost directed the apostle to write, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it

[1] Neh. ii. 2–5. [2] John xv. 7.

upon your lusts" [or desires].[1] There is reason to fear that through the deceitfulness of the old nature many Christians often pray merely that their wishes may be gratified and their comfort promoted, without a becoming submission to the will of God, and without a proper regard for His glory. I do not say that it is wrong, when under the burden of heavy affliction, to exclaim with the Master in Gethsemane, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" but surely it is right to add with the Master, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."[2] Still, let us not be too much troubled about our motive in praying when there is a sincere desire to honor God; because we have the sweet assurance in His word that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."[3] I only desire to put you on your guard "against the wiles of the devil,"[4] and then to encourage you to continue in prayer with the confident expectation that it will be answered, even though you may not live to see the evidence of it in this world. No doubt one of the most delightful surprises in store for us in heaven will be the glorious demonstration of the truth that "praying breath was never spent in vain."

I have the authority of a devoted and well-known minister and author for the following: A Christian father and mother had a son whom they sought to bring up "in the nurture and admonition of the

[1] James iv. 3.
[2] Matt. xxvi. 39.
[3] Ps. ciii. 13, 14.
[4] Eph. vi. 11.

Lord,"[1] and for whom they made continual supplication at the throne of grace. As he advanced, however, in years, he became more and more profligate, until he completed his disgrace and well-nigh broke the hearts of his parents by running away from home and going to sea as a common sailor. On his first voyage he was standing upon the bulwarks of the ship, uttering the most horrible blasphemies, when by a lurch of the vessel he was tossed into the waves. Rescued with difficulty, he was brought back apparently lifeless, and every one around his prostrate body believed that he was dead, except the surgeon, who was moved by some unaccountable impulse to persevere in efforts to resuscitate him, although all hope seemed to be gone. His persistent purpose was at length rewarded by seeing a faint spark of life, which he carefully nourished, and at length the young man, opening his eyes, slowly and deliberately said, "Jesus Christ has saved my soul." After he had fully recovered the power of speech, he stated that as he fell into the great ocean he felt that he was lost forever, and his multiplied sins came trooping about him like demons to drag him down into hell; but suddenly a text which his father had taught him in his childhood came to his remembrance: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief;"[2] and while sinking, as he thought, into perdition, he cast himself upon a gracious Redeemer. His subsequent life proved that he was really born again in that

[1] Eph. vi. 4. [2] 1 Tim. i. 15.

dreadful moment when the sea closed over his head, for he returned home to become a faithful and useful minister of the Gospel, although his salvation was not more complete after years of service in the cause of the Saviour than it was the instant he believed on Him who came to save the chief of sinners.

If he had perished in the water, doubtless his parents would have gone down to the grave fearing that he had made shipwreck of his soul; and yet at the second coming of Jesus they would have been caught up with him in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."[1] Remember for your comfort that in prayer you are not coming to an unjust Judge or an unfeeling Governor, from whose unwilling hand a favor has to be wrung by the force of importunity, but you are approaching a kind and loving Father, who is far more willing to bestow upon you things that are for your good than you are to confer a pleasure upon your child or the dearest friend you have on earth. It dishonors and grieves Him when His people act as did the priests of Baal to whom Elijah said, "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."[2] Why not believe these precious promises? "He that keepeth thee will not slumber."[3] "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous [that is, those who are righteous by faith in

[1] Eccles. xi. 6. [2] 1 Kings xviii. 27. [3] Ps. cxxi. 3.

Christ], and his ears are open unto their cry." [1] "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper." [2]

If, therefore, you are troubled in your prayers by the consciousness of your own sinfulness as well as by the cares and sorrows arising from other sources, you know the remedy. Go to Him who never slumbers, whose ear is always open to your cry, and who is a mighty helper, and frankly confess your iniquities, for "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." [3] This language is addressed only to believers in Christ, and it points out the way of relief from the torturing recollection of the errors and evils into which we have been betrayed. Our relationship to God as His dear children can never be destroyed, blessed be His name! but our communion with Him may often be disturbed, and the method which He reveals to restore that communion is an honest and sincere confession of our faults. He has said, "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," and this is enough. Suppose you have been grievously wronged by one with whom you had lived for years in confidential and pleasant intercourse. Being convinced of the injustice he has done you, he comes at length with confession upon his lips asking to be forgiven. You assure him that he is fully forgiven, and that your relations to each other shall be in the future as they have been in the past. He goes away, but returns the next day with a sad countenance and sorrow-

[1] Ps. xxxiv. 15. [2] Heb. xiii. 5, 6. [3] 1 John i. 9.

ful heart, saying, "Please forgive me." You reply that he is already forgiven, and you now repeat the assurance in all sincerity and love, but he returns the next day, and the next, and the next, with the same cry, "Please forgive me." You at once perceive that his ungenerous suspicion and unbelief would be a more cruel insult than his original offence, for his conduct would plainly declare that he looked upon you as a liar.

God has solemnly declared that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins," and "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar." [1] He uses the words faithful and just rather than the words gracious and merciful, because He is addressing those who are already accepted in the Beloved, of whom the Saviour says, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." [2] Here we have *washed* and *wash*, but in the original they are entirely different words. The former was employed by the Greeks to imply the bathing of the entire person, but the latter denoted the washing of a part of the person, as the hands, the face, or the feet. Among the ancients sandals were worn instead of shoes, and hence that portion of the feet which was exposed would soon become defiled with the dust of the earth. If a man had bathed before going to an entertainment, he would not need to bathe again, but his feet being washed from the defilement contracted by the way, he would be "clean every whit." So he who believes upon the sure testimony of God's word that

[1] John v. 10. [2] John xiii. 10.

the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth him from all sin is bathed as to his entire person, and he needeth not to go back to that blood as if it had lost its efficacy; and yet he cannot travel far in this sinful world without getting his feet, his walk, his ways, polluted by coming into contact with that which is evil. Let him, then, judge himself in the light of the inspired word, and discovering thus what is wrong about him, let him frankly confess his sins, and arise from the confession *knowing* that he is "clean every whit."

It only remains to say a word about wandering thoughts in prayer, of which every Christian, perhaps, has reason to complain. It may be well that we are troubled in this way, for he who is acquainted with his own heart knows his proneness to trust in legalism or in self-righteousness, in place of resting calmly on the finished work of Christ. If we could pray with the fervency and fluency we desire, fixing our minds intently on the majestic Being whom we address, it is probable that we would soon be puffed up with a high conceit of our attainments, and grieve the Spirit of God whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. Still, it is a sore evil to approach God as supplicants and worshippers while thinking of other objects; and it may be of service to suggest that as far as possible you should pray aloud even in your private devotions, and especially that you pray frequently, after reminding yourself that you are about to enter into the presence of the great King. A hymn on this subject by Faber has brought comfort to many souls; and without adding anything of my own, which the

limits of the present chapter forbid, I will here transcribe it for the benefit of the reader.

"Ah! dearest Lord, I cannot pray,
My fancy is not free;
Unmannerly distractions come,
And force my thoughts from Thee.

"The world that looks so dull all day
Glows bright on me at prayer,
And plans that ask no thought but then,
Wake up and meet me there.

"All nature one full fountain seems
Of dreamy sight and sound,
Which, when I kneel, breaks up its deeds,
And makes a deluge round.

"Old voices murmur in my ear,
New hopes start into life,
And past and future gayly blend
In one bewitching strife.

"My very flesh has restless fits;
My changeful limbs conspire
With all these phantoms of the mind
My inner self to tire.

"I cannot pray; yet, Lord, Thou know'st
The pain it is to me
To have my vainly struggling thoughts
Thus turn away from Thee.

"Had I, dear Lord, no pleasure found
But in the thought of Thee,
Prayer would have come unsought, and been
A truer liberty.

"Yet Thou art oft most present, Lord,
In weak, distracted prayer;
A sinner out of heart with self
Most often finds Thee there.

"And prayer that humbles sets the soul
From all illusions free,
And teaches it how utterly,
Dear Lord, it hangs on Thee.

"Ah, Jesus, why should I complain,
And why fear aught but sin?
Distractions are but outward things;
Thy peace dwells far within.

"These surface-troubles come and go
Like rufflings of the sea;
The deeper depth is out of reach
To all, my God, but Thee."

CHAPTER XIX

ASSURANCE OF FAITH

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."—*Romans* x. 13.

NEXT to the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?"[1] perhaps the most important question is, "How may I know I am saved?" But important as is this question, there are probably in the Christian Church very many who have never seriously pondered it, and there are certainly very many more who are wholly unable to meet it with an intelligent and satisfactory answer. Such indifference to the interests of the soul on the part of unbelievers does not surprise us, for they are "dead in trespasses and sins;"[2] but surely it should cause profound astonishment to find that there are multitudes claiming to be "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"[3] who are contented to travel on their way to eternity without knowing whither they are journeying. What would you think of a man hurrying along a highway if he were to inform you that he was escaping from a city doomed to destruction, and on being asked where he was going he should quietly reply, "I do not know; sometimes I am not without hope that I am going to

[1] Acts xvi. 30. [2] Eph. ii. 1. [3] Gal. iii. 26.

a place of safety, but generally I have too much reason to fear that the road I am pursuing leads to fearful suffering and a terrible death; and really, I can tell you nothing about it"? You would justly suspect the sincerity or the sanity of such a man, and yet his supposed reply indicates precisely the state of thousands who profess to believe that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." [1]

They say they have listened to the voice of love warning us "to flee from the wrath to come," [2] but whether the road they have taken will conduct them to the unutterable horrors of that wrath, or to the ineffable glories of heaven, they confess is a matter of doubt, or at best of vague conjecture. It is the height of presumption, they think, for one who is perplexed with the cares and pressed by the engagements of worldly business to be confident of salvation, and they imagine that the assurance of forgiveness can be attained only by a privileged number who devote their undivided time to religious meditation and study and prayer. Hence, in answer to the question, "How may I know that I am saved?" they will either remain silent or reply that we can never know it unless we are conscious of superior holiness, and of fervent love for God, and of unceasing fidelity in His service. In other words, they make the reply to the question depend upon something done *by* us, instead of the work done *for* us by the Saviour; whereas the reply contained in the blessed Gospel is very simple, for it is

[1] Rom. i. 18. [2] Luke iii. 7.

written, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

The word "Lord" here refers, as stated in the previous chapter, to Jesus Christ, who "died for our sins according to the Scriptures," and "rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."[1] A few years after His ascension His followers began to be termed Christians, and they are described by an inspired apostle as "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."[2] To call upon the *name* of the Lord is a Hebrew form of speech denoting the Lord Himself, and it signifies, therefore, to call upon Christ, who, "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."[3] It is obvious, however, that we cannot truly call upon Him unless we believe in Him; but if we sincerely believe in Him as our Saviour, we may *know* upon the best evidence possible—that is, upon His own infinitely trustworthy testimony—that heaven is certain, because He has said, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

All the knowledge we possess is derived from consciousness, or from the evidence of our senses, or from testimony; and the knowledge we gain from testimony may be entitled to as much credit as that which we obtain from consciousness or the evidence of our senses. We are conscious, for example, of certain thoughts and emotions, and we say without hesitation we *know* they really came into our minds and hearts. Or we see a great crowd assembled, and say

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4. [2] 1 Cor. i. 2. [3] Heb. i. 3.

we *know* that many persons have met together. Or we hear an entrancing melody, and say we *know* charming sounds are uttered. Or we taste honey, and say we *know* it is sweet. Or we lay hold of an object, and say we *know* we touch it. But surely we may say with equal confidence we *know* that George Washington, and Napoleon Bonaparte, and Oliver Cromwell, and Julius Cæsar lived, although we are not conscious of their existence, nor have we seen them. He who would gravely express a doubt whether these men actually lived, because the fact has not been revealed to him by his consciousness or the evidence of his senses, would be held in merited contempt for his silly eccentricity, and no one could be induced to waste an argument upon his stupid mind. The testimony that proves their existence is not less certain and conclusive than that of which we are conscious, or which we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears. Indeed, it is more certain and conclusive; for while it is possible to believe that consciousness and our senses may sometimes deceive us, it is not possible to believe that Washington and Napoleon never had any existence whatever except in the imagination of fictitious writers. We *know* that they lived. We *know* that one was President of the United States and that the other was Emperor of France. We *know* that one died and was buried at Mount Vernon, and that the other died and was buried on the island of Saint Helena; and so of any other fact in their history of which we have clear and unequivocal testimony.

Suppose a jury of twelve intelligent, upright citizens were summoned to try a man indicted for homicide. If two witnesses, respected by the entire community for their strict truthfulness, should come into court and solemnly swear that they saw the prisoner at the bar strike the fatal blow which deprived his victim of life, would the jury bring in a verdict of "not guilty" on the ground that they did not and could not *know* that the defendant had committed the crime with which he was charged? Suppose that, in addition to the two witnesses, ten, twenty, fifty, or one hundred men of the highest character for veracity should swear the same thing, without the slightest rebutting evidence, would the jury still say to the judge, We cannot *know* that the prisoner is guilty? Surely not. Their action in the case would say in effect, We *know* that he is guilty; and although we would have gladly given him the benefit of a doubt if any had existed, and although we shrink from the dread responsibility of consigning a fellow creature to an ignominious death, we are bound to render a verdict according to the law and evidence, and therefore hand him over to the executioner. Their knowledge would not be derived either from consciousness or their own senses, but nevertheless they could not be more positive as to the fact if they had personally witnessed the murderous act.

Most of the knowledge we possess is derived from testimony, but still it is knowledge, and not conjecture, nor guessing, nor supposition, nor surmise. All our knowledge of past events in the history of the

world is due entirely to testimony; all our knowledge of present events that are occurring on the face of the earth beyond the narrow range of our own observation is due entirely to testimony; all our knowledge of the discoveries made in various departments of science as the result of patient thought and careful investigation is due, in most instances, entirely to testimony; and yet we do not hesitate to rely upon it with the utmost confidence. We are so constituted that we are compelled to believe the testimony of competent witnesses—that is, witnesses who know whereof they affirm, and whose word is worthy of credit. If a thousand such witnesses should declare that they had visited some place of which we had never heard before, we could no more doubt their statement than we could call in question the evidence of our sight. Nay, if one man of spotless reputation communicates to us a fact that fell under his personal observation, we are prepared to assert that we *know* it to be true simply and singly upon our faith in his veracity. Every day we are gaining knowledge in this manner from intercourse with friends; and if, on repeating information thus obtained, it should be disputed, we would regard the denial as an insult to ourselves or to those from whom we received the statement. Visiting a member of the church recently who is rapidly approaching the eternal world, she told me that her distressing cough had deprived her of sleep during the previous night, and that she was suffering greatly. My reply was, "Cheer up! for you will soon be where 'there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither

shall there be any more pain.'"[1] "Oh," she exclaimed, with touching anxiety depicted on her face, "if I only knew that! How can I know it?" "Suppose," I answered, "when I leave your house, I meet an acquaintance who asks, 'How is Mrs. S—— today?' I tell her that you coughed nearly all night and feel very badly. She then says, 'How can I know that?' What should I reply?" "You would inform her," she answered, "that I told you." "Precisely so, and God tells you in His word that if you believe on His dear Son you shall certainly be saved. If I can believe you without a moment's hesitation, will you not believe the blessed God?"

My object in these arguments and illustrations is to show that we may *know* that of which we have no evidence either from consciousness or from our own senses, merely upon credible testimony. It is in this way the believer *knows* he is saved. He knows it upon the sure testimony of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, and who, "willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast."[2] The testimony of the eternal Jehovah is more worthy of credit than the testimony of the entire human race of all generations combined, and He has given both His promise and

[1] Rev. xxi. 4. [2] Heb. vi. 17–19.

His oath to save with an everlasting salvation every soul that trusts in Jesus Christ. "How, then, does the believer *know* that he is saved?" He knows it because God has said and sworn that we shall come off "more than conquerors through him that loved us."[1] "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself;"[2] and—glory to His name!—He still lives to swear by Himself, "to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all."[3] Observe, the promise might be *sure* to all the seed.

Ponder a few of the words of Jesus, and then decide whether a believer may know upon such testimony that he is saved beyond the shadow of a doubt. "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."[4] "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."[5] "He that believeth on the Son hath ever-

[1] Rom. viii. 37. [2] Heb. vi. 13. [3] Rom. iv. 16.
[4] John vi. 39, 40. [5] John x. 27–30.

lasting life"[1]—not life for a few weeks, or months, or years—not life to be bestowed and taken away, to be gained and lost—but everlasting life, and he has it now and has it forever. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [judgment]; but is passed from death unto life."[2] "Because I live, ye shall live also."[3] "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."[4]

Do you still ask how you may *know* that you are saved? I still reply, By believing the sure testimony of God's word. You know you were a condemned and ruined sinner by believing that word; you know Christ came to die for a lost world by believing that word; and you may know you are saved, if you trust in Jesus Christ, by believing the same word. Let me ask a few plain questions that may present this important subject in a clearer light to your mind. How do you know that the law of God has pronounced a curse against every one who continues not in the strict performance of all the Divine commandments in all their extent, reaching to the most secret emotions of the soul? You know it only by believing His word. How do you know that He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, emptied Himself of His visible glory, and was born of

[1] John iii. 36.
[2] John v. 24.
[3] John xiv. 19.
[4] John xvii. 24.

the Virgin Mary, and performed many wonderful miracles, and preached many sublime and sweet truths, and died upon the cross, and rose from the tomb, and ascended up to heaven? You know it only by believing His word. How do you know that He is to come again to judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and kingdom? You know it only by believing His word. How do you know that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin? You know it only by believing His word. How, then, do you know that, not relying upon yourself, nor upon forms and ceremonies, but upon Christ alone, you shall certainly be saved? Obviously, in the same way—only by believing His word.

You cannot *feel* that the Saviour was born in Bethlehem of Judea, and that He suffered on Calvary, for this occurred more than nineteen hundred years ago; but you can *know* it upon the unimpeachable testimony of God. And so you are not called to *feel* that you can be saved in order to obtain assurance of salvation, but to *know* it upon the sworn testimony of God revealed in His word; or, to put it in another shape, you cannot know that you are saved because you feel it, but you will feel it because you know it. If you hear good news, you do not first feel that it is true, and then believe it, but you first believe it, and then feel happy. If you are anxious to obtain a favor from a friend who promises to grant your request, you do not first feel that he will do it, and then believe him, but you first believe him, and then feel glad and grateful. If you have lost your sight, and a suc-

cessful operation has been performed to remove the obstruction from your vision, you do not turn your attention within to examine the optic nerve, but you open your eyes to look without, and thus discover that you can see. If you have been deaf, and something is done to relieve you of the affliction, you do not begin to study the structure of the tympanum or ear-drum, but hearken to the sounds that are going around you, and thus discover that you can hear. In like manner, if you would know that you are saved, you must fix your gaze upon Christ, and listen to His precious declarations in the Gospel, instead of seeking for comfort amid the darkness and disease that not only belong by nature to the "old man," but will continue to cling to it until it is laid down at the grave, or left behind at the second coming of the Lord. The Westminster Confession of Faith well says, "This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself and all the motions thereof are truly and properly sin."

It is my earnest desire and effort to turn your thoughts entirely away from yourself to the Saviour, for it is the most melancholy business that can engage even a redeemed sinner to be probing into his own soul to find some assurance that he is saved. You can never find it there, but only in the word; and, thank God! having once seen it in the word, you can see it every day and every hour, and as often as you read and believe what Jesus says. Nor is this assur-

ance the privilege exclusively of ministers or of a favored few who have made higher attainments in holiness than the common crowd can ever hope to reach, but it is the privilege of every one without exception who believes the testimony of God's word addressed alike to all. The merchant plunged in the noisy whirl of trade; the mechanic working at his bench; the professional man in the wearisome routine of his daily duties; the wife and mother harassed with the anxieties and cares of her household; the child of affliction bowed under the burden of a well-nigh insupportable sorrow,—may all rejoice in this cheering assurance, and *know* by simply and sincerely believing God that they are forever saved. Christ died for one as much as another of His people, and "he that believeth on him is not condemned,"[1] no matter what may be his circumstances in life. To believe this is to know that we are saved.

Hence, in some of the chief confessions and catechisms which express the doctrinal views of Christians, assurance is represented as the common experience of all who believe in Jesus. Thus in the celebrated Heidelberg Catechism, in answer to Question 21, "What is true faith?" the answer is, "True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the Gospel in my heart; that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness, and salvation, are freely given by God,

[1] John iii. 18.

merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits." So again in the equally celebrated Catechism of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, in answer to Question 36, "What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?" the answer is, "The benefits which in this life [in *this* life, observe] do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end." These questions and answers are heard in a thousand Sunday-schools every Lord's day, but the meaning of the words they contain is seldom understood or even considered; for there are very few in our time who believe, according to their own standards, that true faith is "a certain knowledge" and "an assured confidence," or that the benefits which in this life do accompany justification are "assurance of God's love," etc.

The multitude regard it as impious presumption when they hear Christians at rare intervals say they *know* they are saved, but they do not regard it as impious presumption to make God a liar, as they do by their doubts and fears; for "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."[1] They seem to think that it is only a preëminently holy walk that can secure assurance of faith; whereas it is only assurance of faith that can secure a preëminently holy walk. They seem to think that to obtain this price-

[1] 1 John v. 10.

less boon they must struggle hard and long, and refer as an illustration to Jacob wrestling all night with the Lord, whereas a glance at the passage in Genesis would show them that it was the Lord who wrestled with Jacob; just as He is now wrestling with their ungenerous and unworthy unbelief, seeking to cast it down by the precious word of His grace. They seem to think that it is a token of becoming humility and self-abasement when they lament their wretched condition as sinners, or, at best, indulge a faint hope that they will be admitted, after they are judged, to "the lowest seat in heaven," whereas it is a token of pride and self-righteousness that keep them from seeing how totally lost they really are, and so prevent them from resting at once and fully upon the finished work of Christ for eternal life.

They are not "altogether without hope," they say; but if they believe in Christ (and this is a simple matter of consciousness), why do they not say they *know* they are saved according to the Scriptures? A young lady teaching her class in Sunday-school found the lesson for a certain day embracing the Saviour's declaration, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."[1] A little girl inquired, "Is that true—is it surely true?" "Oh, yes!" replied the teacher, "it is surely true, for Christ says so, and whatever He says is true." "It must be very nice," said the child, "to have everlasting life, and to know that whatever comes you are saved, and saved even now." "Yes," answered the teacher, "it

[1] John vi. 47.

is a great blessing indeed." "Then you are saved, are you not?" asked the interested scholar. "I hope so," was the reply. "Hope so!" exclaimed the child; "why, I thought you told me just now it was sure enough?" The conversation is said to have led the young lady to see her folly, and to cast herself with undoubting confidence upon Christ for a present, complete, and assured salvation. So it would be with numbers of professed Christians who seek to lead souls to the Saviour, if they would reflect for a moment upon the absurdity of telling the inquiring sinner, upon the infinitely trustworthy testimony of Jehovah, that through faith in Jesus he shall certainly be saved, while they themselves, although saying they believe, are filled with doubt and fear concerning their own state and standing before God.

CHAPTER XX

ASSURANCE OF FAITH

THE objection, however, may be here raised that the real point of the difficulty is not yet reached. It will be admitted, some are ready to reply, that the true believer may know he is saved, but the question is, How can he know he is a true believer? Is he not compelled, in the nature of the case, to look at his own heart and life before he can be assured of his interest in the blood of Christ? As Professor Lindsay has put it in his expository Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews (which are for the most part admirable), "When the question is, What is the ground of a sinner's acceptance? the answer is, Christ's righteousness received by faith alone. When the question is, What is the ground of a true saving faith? the answer is, The testimony of God applied to the conscience by the Holy Ghost. But when the question is, Has some particular man, A or B, really believed the Gospel and obtained pardon? it must obviously be something connected with the man himself to which you look for an answer. Has the Gospel produced its legitimate influence upon his dispositions and life? Is he bringing forth fruits meet for repentance? Is he yielding a diligent and cheerful obedience to the commandments of Christ?"

To this the troubled Christian might fairly respond, What is the legitimate influence of the Gospel upon my dispositions and life, and how far does it extend? What are fruits meet for repentance, and how abundant and constant must be their growth and manifestation? What is a diligent and cheerful obedience to the commandments of Christ, and where is the standard to determine whether the obedience is sufficiently diligent and cheerful to entitle me to assurance of salvation? With all deference for Dr. Lindsay's ability as a scholar and writer, I am bold to say that assurance can never, never be obtained in this manner; for in proportion as a child of God is conscientious and painstaking in his walk, so is he made aware of the evils of his nature and his deficiencies in meeting the full measure of his obligations. The holiest saints on earth are invariably those who most clearly perceive and most promptly confess the vileness of their hearts and their failures in duty; and they would be the first to confess that if assurance is derived from anything found in them or done by them, it is a privilege entirely beyond the reach of their experience.

The fact is, assurance does not depend upon our conduct, but our conduct greatly depends upon our assurance. Let no one infer from this that it matters not how a Christian lives, for whatever gives the slightest encouragement to sin; whatever leads any to suppose that the least iniquity in the soul or life is a little thing; whatever tends to dampen the ardor of a fervent aspiration to be perfectly conformed to the will of God,—is utterly contrary both to the letter and the

spirit of the Gospel. Its solemn language is, "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."[1] But the calling here does not depend upon the holiness, although the holiness depends upon the calling. The divine order is, first faith and then works; first grace and then government; first privilege and then responsibility; first relationship and then affection; first life and then activity; first salvation and then holiness. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;"[2] but mark, *as dear children;* and the exhortation is based upon the fact stated in the preceding verse—that "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."[3] So you will find that all the exhortations addressed to the disciples of Jesus in the New Testament take it for granted that faith is already exercised; that grace is already received; that privilege is already enjoyed; that relationship with God as the Father of believers is already established; that life is already bestowed; that salvation is already secured. They are not asked to pray, and work, and give, and be holy, in order to be saved, but because they *are* saved; and salvation is not made to hang upon their discernment of themselves as true believers, but upon their discernment of Christ as the only and all-sufficient Saviour.

It is nowhere written in the Bible, Believe that thou art a believer, and thou shalt be saved, but, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be

[1] 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. [2] Eph. v. 1. [3] Eph. iv. 32.

saved."[1] It is nowhere said, He that believeth himself to be a believer hath everlasting life, but, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."[2] Do you ask, then, how you may know that you are a believer? I reply, You cannot know it by looking at yourself, but only at the Saviour who speaks to you in His word. If a friend of undoubted veracity were to tell you of something that had occurred within his personal knowledge, you would not think of your own heart and life to find out whether you believed him, but only of his unspotted reputation for truthfulness. If a common liar were to relate a wonderful story as a fact, you would not watch the operations of your own mind, and the expressions of your own face, to discover whether you doubted or believed his statement, but you would remember his bad character, and for this reason dismiss what he has said as unworthy of credit. If you were dangerously ill, and your physician, who through long years of practice had never been known to deceive a patient, should at length declare that the crisis of the disease had been safely passed, that all your symptoms were encouraging, and that you were on the way to speedy recovery, you would not be occupied with thoughts about yourself to learn whether you believed him, but your attention would be instantly turned from self to think of his skill, his integrity, and his cheering words. You would not first feel glad, and then believe him, but you would first believe him, and then feel glad. You would not first look for signs of returning health, and

[1] Acts xvi. 31. [2] John iii. 36.

then accept his declaration as true, but you would first accept his declaration as true, and then look for signs of returning health. You would not say, "Doctor, I wish I could believe you; I am trying to believe you; how can I believe you? how can I know that I believe you?" but immediately upon the announcement of the good news you would believe him, and straightway rejoice.

So it was with those who became the disciples of Jesus in the earliest and best days of the Christian Church. They heard the good news of the love of God for a lost world, and of the death of Christ for sin, and of His resurrection for the justification of His people, and without any delay they believed, and at once were made happy in the assurance of salvation. Among them were physicians, and lawyers, and merchants, and mechanics, and farmers, and priests who gave up their office, and women, composing a great company, having the same sinful nature with which we are born into the world, and bearing on their weary souls the same cares that burden us, and knowing "that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble,"[1] were called to help them in the struggle of life. Some of them had been fornicators, and idolaters, and adulterers, and effeminate, and abusers of themselves with mankind, and thieves, and covetous, and drunkards, and revilers, and extortioners; and yet it could be said to them, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the

[1] 1 Cor. i. 26.

Spirit of our God."[1] This wondrous change from the deepest degradation to the highest blessedness was brought about by simply believing upon the testimony of God that Christ had put away their sins; and there is not the slightest evidence that they doubted their acceptance, or that they worried themselves in trying to discover whether their faith was of the right kind, and whether it was sufficiently strong. They were troubled about other questions, which they referred to the decision of the inspired apostles, but there is no proof that they ever asked how they might know they were true believers and thus obtain full assurance of faith.

On the other hand, there is abundant proof that they were strangers to the fear and uncertainty that make up the gloomy experience of at least nine-tenths of the people of God in modern times. Whoever they were, whatever they had been, wherever they lived, they had an assurance of salvation which must have formed at once an unfailing fountain of joy to their hearts and an effective instrument for achieving an easy victory over the world. Thus in writing to the Romans the apostle says in his salutation, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints."[2] If they did not know that they were beloved of God, called to be saints, it is obvious that they could not know that the Epistle was intended for them. In the same strain he goes on to say, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."[3] "Therefore

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 11. [2] Rom. i. 7. [3] Rom. iv. 5.

being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."[1] "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"[2] "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."[3] "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."[4] "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."[5] "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."[6] "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."[7] "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."[8] Is it possible that those to whom such language was addressed could doubt their safety, or need anything else to give them perfect assurance?

In the first Epistle to the Corinthians the same apostle sends his salutations "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints," and he describes them as "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that

[1] Rom. v. 1, 2. [2] Rom. vi. 1, 2. [3] Rom. vi. 6.
[4] Rom. viii. 1. [5] Rom. viii. 34. [6] Rom. xiii. 11.
[7] Rom. xiv. 8. [8] Rom. xvi. 20.

ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."[1] "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."[2] "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"[3] "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."[4] "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"[5] "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."[6] "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."[7] "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."[8] "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."[9] "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."[10]

[1] 1 Cor. i. 7, 8.
[2] 1 Cor. i. 30.
[3] 1 Cor. iii. 16.
[4] 1 Cor. iii. 21–23.
[5] 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.
[6] 1 Cor. vi. 20.
[7] 1 Cor. x. 13.
[8] 1 Cor. xi. 32.
[9] 1 Cor. xii. 27.
[10] 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Turning to the second Epistle to the Corinthians, we find the apostle saying, "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."[1] "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God."[2] "For we know [not suppose, nor hope, but know] that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."[3] "All things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ."[4] "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."[5] To the Galatians he says, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."[6] To the Ephesians he says, "He hath made us accepted in the beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood;"[7] "Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."[8] To the Philippians he says, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ."[9] To the Colossians he says, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."[10]

[1] 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. [2] 2 Cor. iii. 3. [3] 2 Cor. v. 1.
[4] 2 Cor. v. 18. [5] 2 Cor. v. 21. [6] Gal. iii. 26.
[7] Eph. i. 6, 7. [8] Eph. ii. 13. [9] Phil. i. 6. [10] Col. i. 12, 13.

"And ye are complete in him."[1] To the Thessalonians he says, "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us [mark the past tense] from the wrath to come."[2] To Timothy he says, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."[3] To Titus he says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."[4] To the Hebrews he says, "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."[5] "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."[6]

Having thus hurriedly passed through the Epistles which the Holy Ghost dictated to Paul, it only remains to glance at the testimony given by the other inspired apostles. James says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth."[7] Peter, writing

[1] Col. ii. 10.
[2] 1 Thess. i. 9, 10.
[3] 2 Tim. i. 7.
[4] Tit. iii. 5–7.
[5] Heb. ii. 11.
[6] Heb. ix. 28.
[7] James i. 17, 18.

to the strangers scattered throughout Pontius, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, declares that they were "elect according to the foreknowledge of God,"[1] and blesses "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,"[2] "whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."[3] John writes not only to the fathers and the young men who were strong, but to "little children, because," he says, "your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake;" and again, "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father."[4] "Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him."[5] "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life."[6] "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness [or the wicked one]. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."[7] Jude addresses "them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in

[1] 1 Pet. i. 2. [2] 1 Pet. i. 3. [3] 1 Pet. i. 8, 9.
[4] 1 John ii. 12, 13. [5] 1 John iii. 2. [6] 1 John v. 13.
[7] 1 John v. 19, 20.

Jesus Christ, and called;" [1] and the beloved disciple raises an ascription of praise, in behalf of all his brethren, "unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." [2]

It is plain from these passages that the Holy Ghost sent His communications to the early disciples as to those who were already saved and who knew they were saved. Indeed, He manifestly designed to give them assurance of this fact; and they could obtain assurance only by believing His word. When it is said, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," [3] and, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself," [4] we are to remember that the witness-bearing of the Holy Ghost is not apart from the word, but that it consists in leading the soul to rest with unwavering confidence upon the testimony of that word. When our Lord said to those who received Him as their Saviour, "Rejoice because your names are written in heaven," [5] and, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," [6] how were they assured of salvation? Clearly, by believing His word; and if they did sincerely believe Him, they not only hoped, but they knew, that their names were written in heaven, and that they would at length reign in the kingdom. They could not know it in any other way. Suppose Christ should now descend from heaven in visible form and say the same thing

[1] Jude 1. [2] Rev. i. 5, 6. [3] Rom. viii. 16.
[4] 1 John v. 10. [5] Luke x. 20. [6] Luke xii. 32.

to you; would you believe Him? Suppose He should send an angel to you as He did to Cornelius to announce the same thing; would you believe Him? Suppose He should write the same thing in a letter and convey it to your mind in that form; would you believe Him? Why not believe Him, then, when He says the same thing in a book, and says it to you no less personally and directly than He did to those who received Him, while He was on the earth, as the Son of God?

Surely you *know* whether you believe that He lived here below, and died upon the cross, and arose from the grave, and ascended up to heaven; and whether He lived, and died, and arose, and ascended, as the Saviour of all who believe that thus He put away sin; and if you so believe, you may *know* that you are a child of God, because it is written, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."[1] You have already confessed with the mouth that this Jesus is your Lord—or you are only waiting a suitable opportunity to confess Him—and you do sincerely believe that God raised Him from the dead for the justification of all His people; and hence you may *know* that you are delivered from the wrath to come, because it is written, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."[2] You *know* whether you are trusting in Him alone for salvation, or whether you expect to enter heaven on the ground that you are good, or on the

[1] 1 John v. 1. [2] Rom. x. 9.

ground that you have joined the church, or on the ground of something else you are doing; and if you can truthfully say that your trust is in Jesus and in none but Jesus, you may *know* that you have passed out of death into life, because it is written, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."[1]

The question here is not whether you are a sinner, for it is certain that you are a sinner, and that you will remain a sinner as long as you live, but it is simply this, Do you believe that Christ is your Saviour? If you do, although the flesh is still in you, "ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit."[2] In other words, although you are a sinner, you are not a sinner; and if you say this is a contradiction in terms, so it is a contradiction in terms to say that you are mortal and at the same time immortal, and yet both statements are strictly true. As the great Bacon has described the believer in one of his striking Christian "paradoxes and seeming contradictions," "He hath within him both flesh and Spirit, yet he is not a double-minded man; he is often led captive by the law of sin, yet it never gets dominion over him; he cannot sin, yet can do nothing without sin." Or, to quote a far higher authority, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;"[3] but the same apostle says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."[4] "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be

[1] John vi. 47.
[2] Rom. viii. 9.
[3] 1 John i. 8.
[4] 1 John iii. 9.

a new lump, as ye are unleavened." If the Christian had not leaven in him, he could not be told to purge it out; and yet the very reason assigned for purging it out is that he has not leaven. The truth is, our "old man" is essentially corrupt, but our "new man" which is created in Christ Jesus is essentially holy; and the moment we are in Him by faith alone, twenty things are said of our sins. First, they are *blotted out;*[1] second, they are *borne by another;*[2] third, they are *cast behind God's back;*[3] fourth, they are *cast into the depths of the sea;*[4] fifth, they are *washed away with cleansing blood;*[5] sixth, they are *covered;*[6] seventh, they are *finished;*[7] eighth, they are *forgiven;*[8] ninth, they are *not beheld;*[9] tenth, they are *not imputed;*[10] eleventh, they are *not remembered;*[11] twelfth, they are *pardoned;*[12] thirteenth, they are *passed away;*[13] fourteenth, they are *purged;*[14] fifteenth, they are *put away;*[15] sixteenth, they are *remitted;*[16] seventeenth, they are *removed;*[17] eighteenth, they are *subdued;*[18] nineteenth, they are *sought for and not found;*[19] twentieth, they are *taken away.*[20] The believer in Christ may *know* upon the sure testimony of God that all this is true as it respects both the sin of his nature and the sins of his life; and hence the believer may *know* in the same way that he is saved.

[1] Isa. xliii. 25.
[2] 1 Pet. ii. 24.
[3] Isa. xxxviii. 17.
[4] Micah vii. 19.
[5] 1 John i. 7.
[6] Rom. iv. 7.
[7] Dan. ix. 24.
[8] Col. ii. 13.
[9] Num. xxiii. 21.
[10] Rom. iv. 8.
[11] Heb. viii. 12.
[12] Micah vii. 18.
[13] Zech. iii. 4.
[14] Heb. i. 3.
[15] Heb. ix. 26.
[16] Acts x. 43.
[17] Ps. ciii. 12.
[18] Micah vii. 19.
[19] Jer. l. 20.
[20] Isa. vi. 7.

But it may be asked whether there are not certain evidences of conversion found in the Scriptures. Undoubtedly there are, but they are not given that we might derive from *them* the assurance of salvation. It was never intended that we should receive assurance by believing ourselves to be Christians, but by believing that Christ is our all-sufficient Saviour. Look at any of the evidences of regeneration mentioned in the Bible, and a moment's reflection will convince you that they were not designed to furnish assurance for which so many sad hearts are longing and striving. Take, for example, the text, "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."[1] This cannot give assurance, for there is not a Christian in the world whose love does not fall far below the measure of his desire and his duty. Take the text, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."[2] This cannot give assurance, for there is no test to decide who are the brethren, and no standard to determine how fervent our love must be, or how far it must extend in covering the faults of those who claim to be Christians. Take the text, "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him."[3] This cannot give assurance; for every true Christian, unless deluded by Satan, will confess that he fails to observe them in many particulars; that when he would do good evil is present with him; and that "no mere man, since the fall, is able, in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them, in

[1] 1 John iv. 7. [2] 1 John iii. 14. [3] 1 John iii. 24.

thought, word, and deed." Whatever purpose, therefore, these evidences may serve, it is a self-righteous and fruitless task to look to them for assurance.

Still, it may be urged that we are commanded to examine ourselves. But not, I reply, to discover whether we are Christians. In the first passage where this command is given the context plainly shows that the examination refers only to the question whether the disciples of Christ were pursuing a course of conduct unbecoming those who came to the Lord's table. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."[1] The question of personal salvation is not at all involved; but they were exhorted to examine their ways, and put from them, as the dear children of God, detected evil; "for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."[2] In the second passage we read, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith,"[3] but here again the context clearly shows that the question under discussion was about the apostle's right to exercise his high office, and not at all about personal salvation. "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me," he says, "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith;" for the fact that they were in the faith was conclusive proof that Christ had owned his ministry, and therefore that he was not an impostor in claiming to be an apostle. Self-examination as conducted in the manner and to attain the ends for which it is usually urged is the most painful and profitless exercise that can engage the soul, and I would confidently

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 28. [2] 1 Cor. xi. 31. [3] 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

appeal to the experience of every conscientious and intelligent Christian to testify whether this is not true. If you expect to get assurance in this way, you might as well expect to get health by looking at disease, to get light by looking at darkness, to get life by looking at a corpse. Self-judgment is quite another thing, and daily should we consider our ways: not to find a ground of assurance, but to confess and forsake all that is evil as judged by the word of God.

It may, however, occur to the reader that there are numerous passages in the Scriptures which warn us against the danger and deception of apostasy. Want of space forbids an examination of these passages, but without going into details, it is sufficient to state that Scripture cannot contradict itself; and having already shown by the abundant testimony of the Holy Ghost the safety of the believer in Jesus, it is certain that the same Spirit cannot teach a directly contrary doctrine. Such passages, which are often wrested from their proper meaning by those who are "unskilful in the word of righteousness," [1] are sometimes given to expose hypocrites, and sometimes to put true Christians on their guard "against the wiles of the devil," [2] but never to shake the confidence of the believer. "To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi" [3] (the home of the redeemed and rejoicing jailer) the inspired apostle writes, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." [4]

[1] Heb. v. 13.
[2] Eph. vi. 11.
[3] Phil. i. 1.
[4] Phil. ii. 12, 13.

In other words, God had worked salvation *in* them, and now they were commanded to work it *out*—to work, not *for* salvation, but *from* salvation already received; to work, not *for* life, but *from* life already bestowed. And if anything can arouse us to ceaseless activity, to sustained enthusiasm, to practical holiness, and to personal love in the service of our divine Master, it is the knowledge of the fact that through His pitying grace and precious blood He has freely, fully, and forever saved us. Then we will understand the deep meaning of the words,

> "I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
> And Jesus Christ is my all in all."

Then we can say, in the confidence and joy of a simple faith, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."[1]

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."[2]

> "Can it be right for me to go
> On in this dark, uncertain way?
> Say 'I believe,' and yet not know
> Whether my sins are put away?
>
> "Not know my trespasses forgiven,
> Until I meet Him in the air!
> Not know that I shall get to heaven
> Until I wake and find me there!

[1] 2 Tim. i. 12. [2] Jude 24, 25.

"Not know my state till on my brow
Beams the celestial diadem!
Why, surely all the world will know
That I'm a pardoned sinner then.

"Must clouds and darkness veil my brow
Until I dwell with saints in light?
And must I walk in darkness now,
Because I cannot walk by sight?

"And shall I just begin to say,
'Father, Thine every word is true,'
And cast my doubts and fears away,
When all the world will own it too?

"Is this the way to treat the God
Who bids me love and trust Him now?
Is this the way to use the word
Given to guide me here below?

"How can I forth to sinners go,
And tell of grace so rich and free,
If all the while I do not know
Whether that grace has smiled on me?

"How can it be my joy to dwell
On the rich power of Jesus' blood,
If all the while I cannot tell
That it has sealed my peace with God?

"How can I be like Christ below—
How like my Lord in witness shine—
Unless with conscious joy I know
His Father and His God as mine?

"Oh, crush this cruel unbelief;
These needless, shameful doubts remove;
And suffer me no more to grieve
The God whom I do really love."

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